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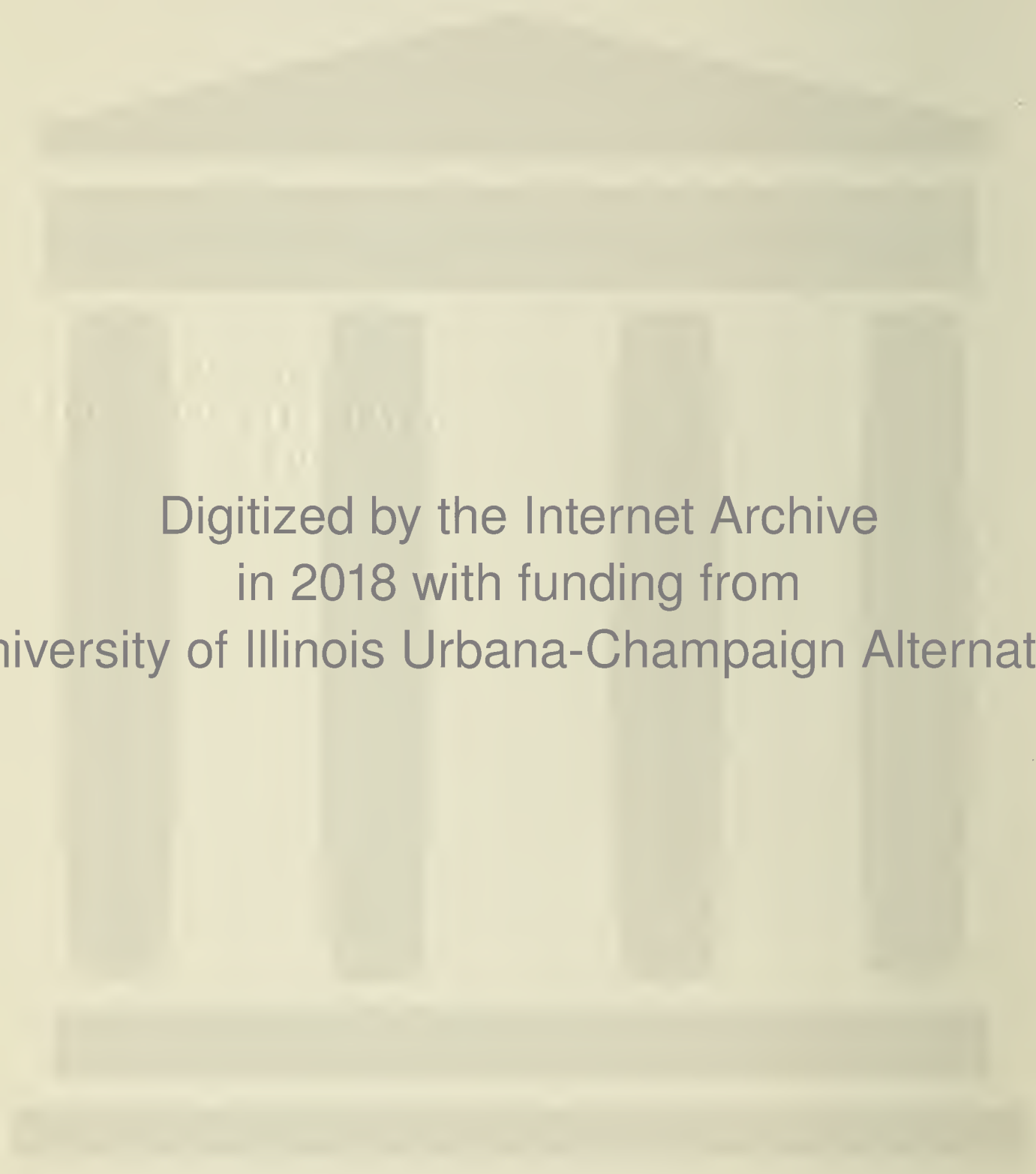
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III. The Housing Problem



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Tenement House Regulation—The Reasons for It—Its Proper Limitations

By Honorable Robert W. De Forest, Tenement House Commis-
sioner of the City of New York

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TENEMENT HOUSE REGULATION—THE REASONS FOR IT—ITS PROPER LIMITATIONS

By ROBERT W. DE FOREST

Tenement House Commissioner of the City of New York

When Theodore Roosevelt, then Governor of the State of New York, attended the opening of the Tenement House Exhibition of the Charity Organization Society of New York, and looked over the models of tenements, old and new, and the charts which showed the close connection between the housing of the vast majority of that city's population, and health, pauperism and crime, he said to the few of us who had organized this exhibition—"Tell us at Albany what to do, and we will do it." The result was the New York State Tenement House Commission of 1900, the enactment last year of the most advanced code of tenement house laws as yet put in force in any American city, and the creation for the first time in this country of a department directly charged with the oversight of the construction and proper maintenance of tenement houses.

The tenement house problem we had to meet in New York was the most serious of any city in the civilized world, for in New York, according to the last census, out of 3,437,202 inhabitants, 2,273,079, or more than two-thirds, lived in tenement houses, and there were 82,652 of these tenements in the city.

The interest in this particular phase of the housing question is not confined to New York. No one who has followed, even carelessly, public opinion on this subject can fail to realize the hold it has upon the public conscience. It may be that some tremble at the effect upon their own fortunes of a possible social revolution, and seek to protect themselves, for their own sake, by trying to make what they call the lower classes more comfortable in their homes. But the large body of men and women in this country who are giving to this subject attention, are doing so from love of their fellow-men, and an earnest desire to give them in their homes some of the healthful surroundings and comforts they enjoy in their own.

There are few large cities in America in which there is not some tenement regulation, and some agitation for its extension. At the moment there is an active movement in Boston for the appointment of a commission to frame a new code of tenement house laws for that city. There is a similar movement in Chicago and in Cincinnati. Nor is this activity confined to the larger cities. Kansas City in the West, Hartford in the East, Yonkers, Syracuse and Rochester in New York, are already moving in the same direction, and the subject is receiving close attention in Washington, Cleveland and Pittsburg.

The New York law of last winter was a state law applicable to all cities of the first class. It included Buffalo as well as New York, and Buffalo did its full part in securing the enactment of the law. Philadelphia is emphatically the City of Homes, and not of tenements. Fortunately for Philadelphia, its working classes are almost exclusively housed in single family dwellings. It has, as most of you know, an admirable code of tenement house laws, which has proved very useful to us at New York in preparing ours, and it has its Octavia Hill Association to advance the cause of housing reform.

In some quarters benevolent people are proposing to build model tenements. That is good as far as it goes, but if at the same time other people, not benevolent, who have no motive but gain for themselves, are permitted to build tenements which are not models, the extent of progress is very limited. What we must do, first and foremost, is to secure proper legislation, using that term in its broadest sense, to include city ordinance, as well as state law. Legislation to regulate building, so as to secure for new buildings proper air and light space and proper sanitation; legislation to regulate, in buildings old and new, their maintenance so that health conditions may be improved and at least not be impaired; legislation, moreover, that provides the means for its own enforcement, by proper inspection.

Most of us have been brought up to believe that, as owners of real estate, we could build on it what we pleased, build as high as we pleased, and sink our buildings as low as we pleased. Our ideas of what constitutes property rights and what constitutes liberty are largely conventional. They vary with time and place. They are different in different countries. Liberty, proper liberty, to-day, may, under changing conditions, become license to-morrow.

I came home from Europe not long since with a French friend, who had gone home to his native country to take possession of his ancestral estates. He told me of having found the trees grown up quite thickly around his father's country home, and of the difficulties he had encountered in obtaining permission from the public authorities to cut down some of them, which was finally only granted on condition that he replanted elsewhere. That his trees could only be cut down with the consent of the public authorities, and that he could properly be required to replant elsewhere as a condition of obtaining that consent, seemed to him a part of the eternal order of things. He no more questioned it in his mind than we, who live in cities, question the propriety of obtaining from the city building department a permit to build, based upon approval of our architect's plans.

Lecky, in one of his later books, speaking of sanitary legislation, says: "Few things are more curious than to observe how rapidly, during the past generation, the love of individual liberty has declined; how contentedly the English race are committing great departments of their lives to the web of regulations restricting and encircling them." It is not that love of liberty has declined; it is that the English race are meeting new conditions with the same genius with which they have evolved their great system of common law. Living, as most of them did a century ago, in separate houses, and in small villages or towns, every man could build as he pleased and could maintain his building as he pleased without seriously endangering the liberty of his neighbors, but with the steady movement of the population from the country to the city, and the marvelous growth of cities, not only horizontally but vertically, new conditions must be met, and the property rights and liberty of one neighbor must be limited to protect the property rights and liberty of another. If a man built an isolated house in the country, without light or air for the bedrooms, and kept it in such filthy condition as to breed disease, it is a fair question whether his liberty should be infringed by any building or health regulation. He may be fairly left free to suffer the consequences of his own misuse of his liberty. His death, and that of his family, from disease so caused may, as an awful example, do more to advance civilization by making his neighbors more careful, than would his life and theirs under enforced sanitary regulation. But if that same man is separated from you and me only by a board partition or twelve-

inch wall, and our families meet every time they go into the street or into the back yard, his liberty must be restricted in some degree in order to enable you and me to enjoy ours.

How and why has tenement house law been evolved in American cities? In the same way in which the Anglo-Saxon mind deals with any such problems. Just as it evolved common law, and for the same reasons. First a case—that is, an evil—to be remedied; afterward a decision—the application of the remedy, and the establishment of a principle or law by which similar evils shall be remedied. It is not according to the genius of our race to provide the remedy in advance of the supposed disease. Better be sure that the disease really exists, even if some few die from it, and then provide the remedy which will be sure to meet actual conditions, than to burden the community with advance remedies for diseases that after all may prove to be imaginary. Even if the disease be not imaginary, such remedies are apt to be worse than the disease itself. Thus, in Anglo-Saxon countries, a conflagration has usually preceded precautions against fire, and the evils of sunless, airless and unwholesome tenements have preceded any attempt to prevent these deplorable conditions. Eventually we act, and when we do we act practically.

It may be well to define what is meant by a tenement house, for without definition there is infinite confusion in the use of this term. In one of our recent civil service examinations in New York, a candidate, evidently “learned in the law,” or supposing himself to be so, defined it as being “That which is neither land nor hereditament.” It has its popular and its legal meaning. Popularly, it is used to designate the habitations of the poorest classes, without much thought of the number of families living under any particular roof. The National Cyclopedia significantly says: “Tenement houses, commonly speaking, are the poorest class of apartment houses. They are generally poorly built, without sufficient accommodation for light and ventilation, and are overcrowded. The middle rooms often receive no daylight, and it is not uncommon in them for several families to be crowded into one of their dark and unwholesome rooms. Bad air, want of sunlight and filthy surroundings work the physical ruin of the wretched tenants, while their mental and moral condition is equally lowered. Attempts to reform the evils of tenement life have been going on for some time in many of the great cities of the world.”

Legally, tenement is applied to any communal dwelling, inhabited by three, or in some cities four, or more families, living independently, who do their cooking on the premises. It includes apartment houses, flat-houses and flats, as well as what is popularly called a tenement, if only built to accommodate three, or as the case may be four, or more families who cook in the house. It is in its legal sense that I use the term. At first blush it may seem objectionable to class apartment houses, flat-houses and tenements, so called, together, and subject them to the same code of regulation. Practically, it has never been possible to draw any line of separation between different houses which are popularly designated by these different words. Nor has anyone ever suggested any regulation proper for the poorest tenement, using the word now in its popular sense, which would not be voluntarily, and as matter of self-interest, complied with in the most expensive apartment house. Nor is there any certainty that what to-day is popularly called an apartment house may not to-morrow, in popular parlance, be a tenement of the worst kind. My own grandmother, within my own recollection, lived in what was then one of the finest houses, in one of the most fashionable streets of New York. Not long since I passed the house, and noticed on the front door a sign reading, "French flats for Colored People."

In its earliest form (and many cities have not yet passed beyond the first stage) the tenement was a discredited private house, or other building, not originally built for the occupation of several families, but altered for the purpose. Each floor of what was originally a private dwelling was changed so that it could be occupied by a family. Later on—it may be at the beginning—each floor was subdivided between front and rear, so that it could be occupied by two families. One of the chief evils of such tenements arose from cellar occupation, and consequently some of the earliest tenement house regulations relate to the occupation of cellars.

In its second stage the tenement house is built for the purpose, imitating, not infrequently, in a servile manner, the arrangement of the altered house, with its dark rooms, and only gradually being adapted to a new architectural form growing out of its special use. The introduction of running water and city health regulations made it possible and desirable to locate water-closets inside. Courts and air-shafts increased in size. Fortunately, the process of evolution is not exhausted, and is still going on.

The tenement is still regarded in many places as an exotic, not adapted to our climate. But, judging from the history of New York and other cities, West and East, the tenement house has come to stay, and is, perhaps, destined to crowd out other and better forms of housing. I remember well when the first tenement to be dignified by the term apartment house was built in New York. It was in the early 70's. Now it is a prevailing type of new building for dwelling purposes on Manhattan Island. There were no less than 82,652 tenements in Greater New York at the time of the last census. The development of the tenement has been largely influenced by legislation intended to prevent its worst evils. To test the reason for such legislation, and to define its limitations, a brief summary of particular subjects of regulation is desirable.

Protection against fire is almost universal. Structural provisions directed to this end are contained in the building laws of all cities. In New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Jersey City, Providence, Syracuse and Nashville, all tenements must have fire-escapes. All tenements over two stories in height must have fire-escapes in St. Louis, Baltimore, Louisville, Minneapolis, St Paul, Denver, Toledo and Columbus. In Chicago, Cleveland and Cincinnati, this rule only applies to tenements over three stories in height. In many cities tenements must be fireproof throughout when over a certain height. In Philadelphia this is true of all over four stories; in Washington of those over five stories; in New York, Buffalo, Louisville, Minneapolis and Denver, of those over six stories in height. In Boston, the limit is 65 feet.

Light and ventilation are protected by minimum open spaces. In Philadelphia there must be open spaces at the side or rear equal to one-fifth of the lot area, and the minimum width of all spaces is eight feet. In Buffalo, under the local law in force before the general state act of 1901 was passed, the minimum width of any outer court was six feet in two-story buildings, eight feet in three and four-story buildings, and one additional foot in width for each additional story. The minimum interior court was eight by ten. In Boston, a clear open space at the rear must be left equal to one-half the width of the street on which the tenement fronts, and there must be two open spaces at least ten feet wide. In some cities the required court area is expressed in square feet, without regard to minimum width or length, and increases proportionately with the height of the building. This principle is adopted in New York,

where the minimum width of exterior courts in buildings five stories high is six feet on the lot line and twelve feet between wings, and the minimum area of interior courts on the lot line in buildings of the same height is twelve by twenty-four, reduced this winter in three-story tenements to eight by fourteen. Such buildings must have an open yard at least twelve feet wide in the rear. The height of rooms is almost universally regulated, the minimum usually being eight feet. The height of tenements is limited in many cities.

Water supply is prescribed. In New York, water must be furnished on each floor. In Philadelphia and Buffalo, on each floor, for each set of rooms. In Boston, Chicago, Jersey City and Kansas City, in one or more places in the house or yard.

Water-closet accommodation is very generally prescribed. In Philadelphia, and in New York under the new law, there must be one for every apartment. Under the old law in New York, and at present in Chicago and Detroit, there must be one for every two families. In other cities the unit is the number of persons. It is twenty persons in Boston, Baltimore and Denver; ten persons in Rochester.

The reasons for tenement regulation may be roughly classed as follows—precise classification is impossible, as it is seldom that any particular regulation is attributable solely to a single reason:

The protection of property rights in adjacent property. Such is the reason for regulations requiring fireproof construction in whole or in part. Such is the chief reason for limitations of height and for leaving an obligatory open space at the rear of each house so as to preserve thorough ventilation for the block. The protection of neighbors and the community from unsanitary conditions, by which they might be affected, or which might breed contagion. Under this class falls the great body of sanitary law and tenement house regulation of a sanitary kind. That all legislation which falls within these classes can be justified as a proper restraint on the liberty and property rights of some, in order to protect and preserve the property rights and liberty of others, is clear.

There is another and increasing class of regulations intended to protect the life and health of those who cannot, it is supposed, protect themselves by any means within their control. Fire-escapes, which are almost universally required by law in non-fire-proof tenement houses, belong to this class. There is no such regu-

lation for private houses, and there is usually no such requirement for two-family houses. The reason for the fire-escape in tenements and hotels must rest either on the supposed inability of the inmates to protect themselves, as the owner of a private house can protect himself and his family, or else from the greater number of persons exposed to risk. Of such class also is the law providing that there be a separate water-closet for each apartment, as in New York, or for every two families, as in Detroit and elsewhere, and that lights be kept burning in public halls at night. No such regulations exist for private houses. They can be only justified in tenement houses on the theory that the tenants in such houses must live in them, cannot control their maintenance in these particulars, and are entitled to the protection of affirmative law for these necessities or conveniences. It may be answered that they need not rent rooms in houses not furnished with separate water-closets, and the halls of which are not kept lighted, unless they wish to, and that they should not be restricted in their liberty to rent rooms in such houses, it may be at a lower rent, if they so desire. The reply may be, and in some cities would properly be, that they would have no choice unless the law intervened to protect them. Moreover, it might be urged that in the provision for separate water-closets for each apartment, and in the lighting of public halls, there was an element of protection to public health and morals in which the community had an interest, and which the community by regulation should insure.

I have sought by these illustrations to point the closeness of the dividing line between justifiable restriction of the individual liberty of the house builder and house owner, for the protection of the liberty of others, and paternalism. It is undoubtedly true, as Mr. Lecky states in the concluding part of the paragraph to which I have already referred, that "the marked tendency of these generations to extend the stringency and area of coercive legislation in the fields of sanitary reform is one that should be carefully watched. Its exaggerations may, in more ways than one, greatly injure the very classes it is intended to benefit." There is real danger lest in our eagerness and earnestness to improve the condition of others, we legislate from the point of view of those fathers and mothers who are always ready to regulate the affairs of every family but their own, and break down the habit of self-dependence

and the spirit of individual responsibility upon which the vigor of our American social fabric so largely depends

Perhaps the most important limitation to tenement house reform, in the construction of new tenements, is the question of cost. If tenements cannot be rented at a profit they will not be built. There are many things which it would be desirable to have in a tenement, each one of which adds to its cost, and if they be required by law to an extent which makes it unremunerative, tenement building will cease. It is undoubtedly desirable that all tenements should be fireproof throughout; indeed, the same may be said of private houses. In 1892, Boston so prescribed; but few, if any, were erected, and the law was consequently modified in 1899.

The amount of rent which the average American working-man in any particular city can pay approximates a fixed quantity. Any legislation which materially increases this rent, or which prevents building and therefore prevents his finding shelter, is quite certain to be repealed. This proposition, however, is not so discouraging as it may appear at the outset. The standard of living among our working classes is steadily improving. What yesterday was a luxury, to-day is a necessity. In many cities, apartments which are not provided with running water are unrentable. Bathing facilities are increasingly in demand, and are frequently being provided. Families that have once lived in apartments where the bedrooms have light and air, will not hire apartments which are dark and unventilated. The supply must meet the demand. Interest rates are receding; economies in construction are being introduced, which some time ago were unknown, largely by the building of houses by the wholesale. The large profits which were demanded as the normal income on tenement houses in the past are no longer expected. Rooms up to the standard of the modern tenement house law can be provided without increasing the rental.

Another limitation in many cities is the prevailing lot dimension. If Dante were to-day writing his "*Inferno*," the lowest depth would be reserved for those men who invented the twenty-five foot lot and imposed it on so many American cities. In unbuilt districts, where several lots, whatever be their dimensions, can be purchased and built upon together, the lot dimension does not necessarily control the frontage of the building, and the tendency

in such districts in New York is to build tenement houses of wider frontage, which admit of better court arrangement, but there are usually so many lots separately owned, and so many which are situated between lots already built upon, so that their enlargement is impossible, that any proposed legislation prescribing court areas which, however desirable, puts the prevailing lot unit at a disadvantage, will meet with overwhelming resistance. No better illustration of this can, perhaps, be found than the story of New York legislation this winter, of which I intend to speak. From the point of view of proper tenement house construction, happy that city in which land is sold by the front foot, instead of by any procrustean lot unit.

There is another practical limitation, not necessarily to the enactment of tenement house law, but to its permanence, in the extent to which it, either actually or supposedly, interferes with the profits of builders and material men, and perhaps no better illustration of this practical limitation can be given than a simple recital of the contest over the radical amendment of the New York law which has been waged at Albany during the past few weeks, and which terminated only a few days ago. The New York law of 1901 marked the longest step in advance that tenement house reform in that state has ever taken, though in its provisions for court areas, the particular point in which it was assailed this winter, it does not go so far as the Philadelphia law, and but little further than the previous Buffalo law. It unquestionably increased the cost of construction by its fireproof provisions, as well as, though in a less degree, by its larger court areas. That there would be, this winter, organized effort on the part of building and real estate interests to modify it was certain and inevitable. Many bills were introduced amending it, but my illustration only concerns two, the City Administration bill, in the preparation of which I myself had part, and a bill introduced by a Brooklyn member of the Legislature in the interest of Brooklyn builders and material men, who claimed that they represented the people of Brooklyn. It is a fair question whether Brooklyn did not really have a grievance against last winter's law. One of the prevailing types of Brooklyn tenements is a three-story house on a twenty-five foot lot, with two families on a floor, making six families in all, each apartment running through from front to rear. These houses had been built with interior courts or air-shafts about two and a half

feet wide and ten feet long. These light-shafts were supposed to light and ventilate the interior rooms of each apartment. As a matter of fact, they furnished little light or ventilation to any bedrooms below the top floor. The same type of air-shaft in taller tenements of Manhattan was one of the chief evils against which the new law was directed. These evils were undoubtedly less in a three-story building, but still existed. The minimum interior court or air-shaft permitted by the new law in such buildings was eleven feet wide by twenty-two feet long. Such a court prevented the building of this type of house, and no tenements of this type were consequently built on twenty-five foot lots from the time when the law went into effect. The Brooklyn bill sought to amend the law, as respects three and four-story houses, by permitting a return to the old air-shaft, with an increased width of six inches, and with a somewhat increased length, making it three by twelve. We conceded that under the law it was impossible to build this particular type of tenement on a twenty-five foot lot, with each apartment running through from front to rear, but we demonstrated that it was perfectly practicable to build what seemed to us a much better two-families-on-a-floor tenement on such a lot, by putting one apartment in the front and another in the rear; that it was perfectly practicable to build, under the law, apartments running through from front to rear on a somewhat larger lot, and that the law interfered with no other current type except the one in question. The separate front and rear apartments, which were practical under the new law, are usual in Manhattan, and the rent obtainable from the front apartment differs but little from that obtainable from the rear apartment. Our Brooklyn friends insisted that though Brooklyn was a borough of New York and only separated from Manhattan by the East River, Brooklyn people were so accustomed to apartments running through from front to rear that they would not rent rear apartments, and indeed, that the social distinction between families who could afford to live in the front apartment, and those who would be forced to live in the rear apartment, was so great that they would not rent apartments in the same house.

This proposition may seem strained, but we of the City Administration were finally satisfied that so much regard should be paid to local habits and customs, that it was wise to modify our minimum court areas in three-story houses to such a point as would

permit the building of this particular type of Brooklyn house. Plans were then made which demonstrated beyond peradventure that by reducing the minimum court area to 8x14, instead of 3x12, this particular type of house could be built, with bedrooms infinitely better lighted and better ventilated than those opening upon the narrow shaft. One would have supposed that this improved plan, which permitted Brooklyn builders to construct a front-to-rear apartment, for which they claimed so many advantages, would have been received with acclamation as a solution of the difficulty. Not at all. Some insisted that Brooklyn must have what it was accustomed to, narrow air-shaft and all. Others more openminded, while frankly admitting that the new plans made better apartments, which should bring in an increased rental of from fifty cents to a dollar a month, insisted that tenants would not pay more rent, and that because the buildings under these new plans cost say \$800 per house more than under the old plans, they would not be commercially profitable, and therefore would not be built. Not a word was said as to the interests of tenement dwellers. There was no dearth of apartments in Brooklyn at current-rents. Indeed, the supply was far beyond the demand. The whole issue turned on the commercial profitableness of building under the law, as amended by the City Administration bill, to meet this Brooklyn condition. The Brooklyn builders were perfectly frank in their arguments. They started with the premise that the building of tenements in Brooklyn must be made commercially profitable; that buildings under the new plan, with a minimum court area of 8x14, would not be commercially profitable, because about \$800 was added to their cost, and therefore insisted that the law should be amended to meet their ideas of commercial profitableness. That the purpose of the law was not to promote building operations, or increase the value of real estate, but to provide healthy habitation for tenement dwellers, and that that purpose was certainly being accomplished under the new law so long as tenement dwellers could house themselves without any increase in rent, was ignored, nor if it had been urged would it have seemed to them an argument worth considering.

I am happy to say that they did not succeed, but they demonstrated the influence which can be exerted upon the average legislator by men of their type through their trade and allied labor organizations, and had those who, at the moment, represented the

unorganized public in the cities been less active, and had the force of public opinion as voiced by the press been less outspoken, the result might have been different.

The advance of tenement house reform undoubtedly means some diminution in the profit of the landlord, or some increase in rent. Improved tenements must cost more. Someone must pay that cost. If any material rise in rents would produce such opposition to the law as to repeal or modify it, then either the cost must be borne by the landlord, or the law must be modified. Whether the landlord's rent will by the law proposed in any city be diminished below the point of legitimate profit, cannot be certainly demonstrated until the experiment be tried. Some enlightened landlords, with a sense of their obligations toward their tenants, are perfectly willing to suffer this small diminution of income. Others are not, and the others, who usually constitute the majority, in alliance with the builders and material men, will always seek to prevent legislation which affects their pockets. Tenement house reform must always be militant, not only to gain ground, but to hold the ground that has once been gained.

There is something for almost everyone to do. Let none suppose that our cities, however small, will remain free from the evils of the tenement house, which in larger cities has necessarily evolved in self-protection tenement house regulation. The tenement has come to the United States, like the Canada thistle, to grow and to multiply. The smaller cities need not go through the bitter experience which is teaching New York and other cities their lesson. They can, by timely regulation, prevent the crystallization of unsanitary conditions into brick and mortar. I do not recommend the adoption in every city of the New York law. It was framed to meet the special conditions there existent. The remedy should be no greater than the prevailing or expected disease warrants. A few elementary regulations with regard to court areas, vacant spaces, and regular and official inspection to make certain that these simple regulations are followed in construction and that ordinary sanitary rules are complied with in maintenance, will suffice, if there always be a keen eye to look some years ahead, to meet future needs before they make themselves unpleasantly manifest in your own surroundings, and before conditions are created, as in New York, which cannot be changed except at great cost to owners and to the municipality.

The Housing Problem in Chicago

By Miss Jane Addams, Hull House, Chicago

THE HOUSING PROBLEM IN CHICAGO

By MISS JANE ADDAMS

Hull House, Chicago

In considering the housing problem in Chicago, it is at once evident that we are not in the deplorable condition of New York, nor yet perhaps in the happy condition of Philadelphia. Until a year and a half ago, we thought that all our problems in connection with the housing question were in the future. We have a way in Chicago of shoving disagreeable problems into the future, and saying that we will take care of them by and by, when our resources are more adequate, when we have developed a little more civic consciousness. An association of people, however, called the City Homes Association, some eighteen months ago, made a very careful investigation of such tenement districts as we have and their report was startling, even to those of us who knew something of the conditions by daily seeing them.

The time at the disposal of the committee was only six months, and Chicago is very large as to area. We have 187 square miles under city management, and the tenement houses, certainly according to the legal definition given by Mr. De Forest, are scattered more or less through that very large region. It seemed, therefore, better to take three districts, limiting carefully the area of the districts, and to make as careful a study as possible of each. The largest one, in two of the river wards of Chicago, was mainly occupied by Italian immigrants and Russian Jews. The second in size was the Polish district northeast of the business quarter of the city, and the third in size the Bohemian district extended south from the centre. We discovered several things which were very surprising, among them that many of the houses were owned or partially owned by the people living in them. The thrifty Bohemian put his savings into a house, perhaps building at first a house on the front of his lot, living in a few rooms, and so saving rent until he had enough money to build a rear tenement, in the end covering up his lot as much as possible and renting it all out. The Italians to a somewhat lesser extent did the same thing, and the Poles also, so that one could not talk of the effect of

tenement house regulation upon the landlord in contradistinction to the effect upon the tenant, for it is very largely the neighbors of the tenants themselves who are the landlords, and the tenant and landlord are represented by the same type of person. Their interests are identical, not in the larger sense, but in the immediate sense, and they stand together either in demanding or opposing certain regulations. The situation is quite unlike that obtaining in the cities where the landlord lives in some other part of the town, and where tenement legislation affects only his property interests and not his human interests.

We also were very much surprised at the density in certain quarters which this investigation disclosed. If the average tenement house density of the three districts investigated were spread throughout the city, we could house within our borders 23,000,000 people. We discovered one-seventh of an acre which was occupied to the ratio of 900 people to the acre, and if that density were applied to our borders we could house, not very comfortably to be sure, all the people of the Western Hemisphere. This seemed to us sufficiently alarming in a city in which it was said that the matter of density was something concerning only the future. The average tenancy in the houses throughout these three districts was only three families to a house. This average means that in many cases there is no real tenement, but a single house. Again, many of these single houses were very small, sometimes containing but two or three rooms, and the average number of rooms to an apartment was 3 116-1000. Although many houses were small and the tenements for each house again small, in certain quarters the density within the houses was very great and the conditions bad. We also found in these three areas almost a hundred full-fledged double-deckers, and a great many more that only escaped being double-deckers through a mere technicality in the definition that had been settled upon. These double-deckers are growing and, unless we have a more vigorous enforcement of tenement house regulations in Chicago, threaten to become very common there.

In both the building department and in the health department of the city, a great deal is left to the discretion of the inspector. Of course, in the city where the landlord not only owns his house but also lives in it and at least knows which way his tenants vote, this matter of discretionary power becomes an important one. It is very hard for an official to stand out against a certain amount of

political pressure, and the consequence is, that while there are laws fairly good on books, this large discretion left to the enforcing officers has made many of them of little account. This is especially true in regard to the yard spaces, which are set between the front and rear tenements, the size of the shafts, and other special regulations. The City Homes Association is trying at present to secure a better code of tenement house legislation, to restrict the discretionary power and thus to limit the very casual and varying judgment of the enforcing official, and to give some sturdy standard in law observances.

In the matter of rents, Chicago is in rather a curious state. The property in the river wards, in which many of these houses are situated, has been held for a long time by its owners upon the theory that finally factories and shipping interests were going to occupy the land. The consequence is, that the little houses which were built very soon after the fire have been allowed to remain, without very much repair and without very much change, and in many cases have become so wretched that only a low rental can be asked for them. The men who own them, content themselves with getting out of the houses about enough to pay taxes and to keep up a minimum amount of repairs. So that the rent of certain houses in the river districts is low. Perhaps this is not low for Philadelphia, although I am sure it will sound low for New York. The average rent paid by an Italian family for an apartment is \$4.92 a month, or \$1.78 per room a month; the average rent paid by a Bohemian family for an apartment is \$5.93 a month, or \$1.64 a room; by a Polish family \$5.66 for an apartment, and \$1.40 for a room; by a Jewish family \$8.28; the average rent rising to \$2.12 a room. Whenever the question of modern tenements comes up in Chicago, and the cost is carefully gone into, it is found very difficult to furnish apartments in good, satisfactorily well-built houses at so low a rental, and yet once this rental has been established, it is found on the other hand very difficult to ask much more than the current rate. By a strict enforcement of law many of these houses should be demolished. That would rid the city of a number of unsanitary houses and bring conditions to a more normal situation.

What Mr. De Forest says about the twenty-five foot lot, I should very much like to corroborate. It is very difficult to erect a convenient house on a lot 25 feet wide and 120 feet deep. This

unfortunate division of property was made in the first instance, doubtless, to enable as many men as possible to own their own separate houses. For a long time we have made a sort of fetich of the house, and have come to believe that a man has a sense of being at home only when he is within four walls standing alone upon one piece of ground. In reality the idea of a home reaches back so much further than the four walls, and is so much more deeply implanted in the human breast than the ownership of land that we do not need to fear that a new type of house will destroy it. But we are timid and would rather be uncomfortable in a little house than to start out in some reasonable way in building apartments. If one has a house $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide and 24 feet deep and 24 feet high, one has not a very comfortable arrangement. It is not even rationally divided, but by a purely imitative method; in every house you enter you will find the little hall, the little stairs, and all the other things that presuppose plenty of space. If that same strip of twelve feet had been added to the other strips in the block and the whole treated in some reasonable manner, we could comfortably house the same number of people in a sort of glorified tenement house or apartment house; each family might have at least one large living-room where the members could get together in comfort and have a much better chance for conserving family life than they have in the little square box. Some of us still believe that a workingman has a sense of ownership only when he puts his savings into a piece of ground or the house in which he lives. To tie a workman down to a given piece of ground is often of questionable good. A man may put all his savings into a house on the North Side of Chicago, for instance, and before it is paid for, find himself out of work; his next work may be fifteen miles from that place, in South Chicago. If his house is partially paid for, it is very difficult to get rid of it, and it is also difficult and expensive to travel fifteen miles twice a day. If his property had been in some other form, let us say stocks or bonds, it would have allowed him much more mobility in regard to his labor, and he would have a better chance of adjusting himself to the changing conditions of his trade.

A Housing Conference, it seems to me, ought first of all to look at industrial conditions as they confront the workingman of to-day, not as conditions existed fifteen or twenty years ago, nor as they existed for our fathers. A conference should not consider the workingman of its imagination, nor yet the workingman as he

ought to be, but the workingman of to-day as he finds himself, with his family, with his savings, with his difficulty of keeping a place very long, due to the sudden changes in the methods of his trade. His employer is obliged to make constant changes and adaptations in his factory, but his landlord is afraid to try changes in his house. We hold a certain fiction in our minds of what home is and what it ought to be, forgetting how far back it goes, that it can survive all sorts of changes and adaptations, that the one thing which will kill it is that which kills every living thing, *i. e.*, lack of adaptation to its environment; if it fails to adapt itself to the situation as it really exists, it is for the first time endangered. If the community, as a whole, gives its mind to it, as the Philadelphia community seems to be doing, and knows conditions accurately and thoroughly, I am sure we are going to see very marked changes in the housing of the poorer people of the modern cities, and we shall no more cling to the single house than to the country store. The time may come, when, if in any city, the death-rate rises above the normal, that the body of public-spirited citizens shall at once feel forced to do something about it, that they shall be filled with a sense of disgrace and feel that a disaster has occurred in their city. At the present moment the death-rate is constantly above the normal, in certain quarters of our cities; we allow it to be high year after year, knowing that it is excessive. This apathy can only be explained on one of two grounds, either that we do not know the housing conditions which exist, or that we are so selfish as to have no sense of responsibility in regard to them.

DISCUSSION OF THE PAPERS READ BY MISS ADDAMS AND MR.
DE FOREST:

“Q. Is the discretion, which Miss Addams says is abused in Chicago to such an extent, exercised with regard to the legal court area which should be left unoccupied by the building?

“A. (Miss Addams), I would reply, yes, that buildings are permitted to go up with lesser court areas than provided by law. The matter is so largely in the hands of the office giving the permit that almost every provision is changed. I think we found in this investigation houses which illustrated the encroachment upon and the breaking of every single ordinance found upon the statute books, in regard to the shaft area as well as other provisions.

"Q. I cannot see why the figures mentioned should be unduly low for the rent per room per month, or should be too low to permit a reasonable profit to the owner of property. I have rented a six-room house in Washington, around the corner from one of the best residence districts, for \$3.50 per room per month; furnished rooms in New York, near Columbia University, for \$2.00 a week, and downtown, near the business part of the city, for \$1.50, furnished, with attendance. I wonder if Mr. De Forest can tell us what, under modern conditions in New York City, for example, should be a fair rent which would enable a landlord to get a fair profit on the investment per room per month.

"A. (Mr. De Forest), In New York, rents are, I think, on a business basis. In other words, I do think the landlords expect to receive, and do receive from their tenements a normal income, and in many instances more than a normal income. The modern tenements which are being put up by the City and Suburban Homes Company of New York, which are now being increased in number, do produce a fair income, representing not less than 4 per cent on the money invested. I refer to the buildings constructed at the present time under the modern requirements of the state law.

"Q. The Washington Sanitary Improvement Company paid 5 per cent from the very beginning and rents its flats for about \$3.00 per room per month. The buildings are one to three stories high.

"A. Land is considerably higher in Washington. This land is not less than \$150, and usually \$200 a foot. The price quoted lowest was \$1.78 per room per month, whereas your price was \$2.00 a week, for New York; \$3.00 and \$3.50 per month for Washington.

"Q. We have heard this question from the standpoint of Chicago, New York and Philadelphia, but the clientele of this association, as I understand it, covers the entire country, and I should like to ask Mr. De Forest whether it is not true that the investigation made by the Tenement House Commission of New York disclosed the fact that in virtually every manufacturing city of the country there is to-day distinctly a housing problem for the poor and that definite constructive work needs to be done to remedy the evils.

"A. The investigation made by the Tenement House Commission which covered all the large cities, and some of the smaller ones of the country, includes statistics from twenty selected cities.

It is true that the tenement house problem presents itself in a much less degree in some places than in others; it does so to a much less extent in Philadelphia. In other large cities of the country the housing problem exists to a large extent, and so much so in some of the smaller cities that last winter the cities of the second class in New York State—Syracuse, Utica, Albany and Rochester—took up the problem of regulation in these cities. Jersey City, which is directly opposite New York, and which is a comparatively small city, has some of the worst housing conditions in the whole country.

“Q. About how large a proportion of the population is affected by the housing problem in New York?

“A. The total population of New York is about 3,400,000. Out of that population upwards of 2,200,000 live in tenement houses, as legally defined, which includes apartment houses. The proportion in Brooklyn is quite as large as in New York, although there is a smaller number of families per house.

“Q. What is a double-decker?

“A. (Miss Addams), The double-decker was originally, of course, a house, which grew from the fact that there was a front tenement and a rear tenement, and that later the two were joined into one house.

“Q. I would like to ask Miss Addams as to Chicago and Mr. De Forest as to Brooklyn, whether any notice has been taken of the question as to the best pavement for the poor sections of the city, that is, whether asphalt for the lanes and alleys is not, as a rule, cleaner in appearance and in other ways, than other kinds of paving, as cobblestone, for instance.

“A. (Miss Addams), I will ask Mr. De Forest to answer that. Paving is a weak point in Chicago.

“A. (Mr. De Forest), Perhaps I ought to say that I am glad to find some point on which New York has something to say. Most of our congested tenement districts in New York, largely on the East Side, have been paved with asphalt. This is regarded as a matter of grave importance, and was one of the subjects considered by the Tenement House Commission; that in some districts there should be asphalt pavements, because the families almost live in the streets in summer and the children all play there, was one consideration, and keeping the streets clean was another of great importance.

“Q. Do you think that the facilitation of the workingman

in change of residence, either within metropolitan borders, or from one city to another, or from one state to another, is a good thing in contemplation of his privileges and duties as an American citizen?

"A. I think that in industry, as it is now organized, with the sudden changes and fluctuations of skill, if the workman is deprived of the power to sell his labor, it is very bad for him. Then I think the adaptable person is a better American citizen than a person who is planted too hard.

"Q. Are you not, therefore, regarding only the rights and the good that may be done to the individual, eliminating altogether his obligations as a citizen?

"A. What I wanted to say was this, that I think we have a way of relegating all the old-fashioned virtues to workingmen and reserving to ourselves the most interesting and more adaptable virtues. We say to our workmen, do not drink, be thrifty and industrious. These are good but negative. We reserve to ourselves the power of developing an interesting life, and all the rest of it. On general principles, if a man can stay in one place and own his house, of course it is better for him both from a financial and social point of view; but there are exceptions, and we all know that the present industrial conditions imply constant change both in methods and place of manufacture, that if we really understood the workingman's needs and were trying to serve him, we would evolve some such plan as has been evolved in Belgium. A man there puts his savings into the Government Savings Bank, which has all the features of a building and loan association. As I understand it, he may make partial payments upon a house in Brussels, but if his work takes him away from that city to another within the kingdom—let us say Ghent—he may transfer his payments to a house in Ghent. On the other hand he may remain in Brussels, complete his payments until he owns his house or withdraw his stock in his own house, after allowing for proper depreciation, and hold his savings in simple bank stock. The entire arrangement is flexible and adaptable, and transfers the sense of ownership from the simple ownership of land and house, to the more complex one of stock.

"Q. Regarding gardens, playgrounds and gymnasiums, which, in some sections of Philadelphia—namely, the College Settlement—have been located on the tops of buildings for the benefit of children, has that been done in New York and Chicago, and with what success?

"A. I should say, yes, so far as the movement has gone, that is with regard to open playgrounds, not speaking of roof gardens, and with regard to open parks. The small park movement has undoubtedly done a great deal of good, and the children's playground, so far as it has gone. It has not gone to the extent that its friends desire. So far as roof gardens are concerned, that is, the adoption of roofs for recreation, that has not been done so far as I know. It has been thought of and talked of, but never carried out."

Certain Aspects of the Housing Problem in
Philadelphia

Report Prepared by the Octavia Hill Association

CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE HOUSING PROBLEM IN PHILADELPHIA

REPORT PREPARED BY THE OCTAVIA HILL ASSOCIATION

The work of the Octavia Hill Association has been one of detailed management of the houses of the poor and not of investigation, but it cannot let this opportunity pass without describing some of the conditions known to it. No comprehensive report of housing conditions in Philadelphia has ever been made. The Seventh Special Report of the Commissioner of Labor in 1894 on the Slums of Great Cities has interesting data on living conditions at that time in certain sections of the slum districts, while "The Philadelphia Negro," a social study, by W. E. Burghardt Dubois, published by the University of Pennsylvania in 1899, throws a vivid light on the problem in its relation to the colored population of the Seventh Ward. We believe that the time has come for wider consideration of this important subject. Our purpose in this paper is to urge strongly the importance, if not the necessity, of a thorough investigation and that one may be undertaken in the near future before our situation becomes more serious.

Philadelphia had in 1900 a population of 1,293,697 persons, covering an area of almost 130 square miles, with an average density of about fifteen persons to an acre. Of its 258,690 dwelling-houses more than one-half are two-story dwellings, and its average number of persons to a dwelling is 4.91. These facts show that our problems differ radically from those of New York and Chicago and that it is the house built for occupation by a single family and not the tenement, which is the important feature for us to consider. The excellent system which has made Philadelphia famous and has given it a larger proportion of separate dwellings for the working classes than any city of an equal population, has blinded our eyes too long to the evils which have been growing up about us. Until within a few years the building law was practically a dead letter, and no check was placed on the avarice of the landlord in his desire to gain the utmost possible return from his ground space. Even to-day we have no laws for the enforcement of underdrainage and our municipal departments are unable with their small force

of inspectors to cope with the conditions we are facing. These facts have given us problems which though the way to their solution may be plain, yet demand serious consideration.

Philadelphia can be justly proud of the way in which the needs of the regularly employed wage-earner have been met by the small house. In the newer and outlying parts of the city this house is found in its best development. There are rows upon rows, streets upon streets of attractive four and six roomed houses with an increasing number of modern conveniences. Sanitary plumbing, bath, range, furnace, gas, a cemented cellar, a porch and a small yard may be had for from \$15.00 to \$20.00 a month. Three thousand six hundred and twenty-five two-story houses were in 1901 added to the already large number of these and the Building and Loan Associations bear witness to the continued demand and the increase of popular ownership.

Nearer to the centre of the city also, and in the great mill and factory districts, one finds still the individual home, but here the houses are older, the rows seem longer and more unbroken in their monotony and in innumerable courts and alleys there is surface drainage. Here, also, we find the various features of the problem which grows more difficult in the older parts of the city and as the social scale is lowered. In prosperous times, each small house holds one family. In times of industrial depression the house built for one family must with no additional conveniences, no better arrangements for privacy and comfort, accommodate two or more.

For the purpose of this report we have considered mainly the district in the southeastern part of the city where our own work centres.¹ The five wards, where this district lies, contain about one-tenth of the population of the city and cover about one-eighth of the area or one and three-fifths square miles. The average density of population in these wards is 123 persons to an acre. In the Third Ward the average number increases to 209. The wards are relatively well provided with park area, but the whole amount used for this purpose is only 16.88 acres out of a total of 1030 acres, which shows the crying need there is for more breathing spaces in these congested districts. There are a number of old graveyards which would be valuable additions to the park area if they were so used. The total number of inhabitants in the five wards is

¹ The five wards are the Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Seventh. One-half of the Seventh extends out of the district towards the west, but shows many of the same characteristics.

127,466. Of these, 50,733 are foreign born, 17,611 are negroes. It is impossible to attempt a description of the many phases of life throughout this region. The large numbers of foreigners are grouped together according to nationality, in fairly well-defined geographical areas, each showing many characteristics of its own national life. The slum districts shift their centres somewhat in the changing of populations, but are seemingly as strongly entrenched as ever and extend over increasingly large areas. Architecturally the buildings show great variety. Quaint, gabled frame houses often in the most dilapidated condition, modern brick dwellings, colonial houses of fine proportions, and tenements are found side by side often in picturesque proximity.

The size of the block in Philadelphia is an important factor in any consideration of its housing conditions. This block averages about 400 feet square. By the purpose of the founder of the city it was intended that each house should be in the middle of the "breadth of his ground, so as to give place to gardens, etc., such as might be a green country towne which might never be burnt and might always be wholesome."¹ This large size has continued to be the plan of the city and has lent itself readily to being cut up into the network of inner courts and alleys which are practically universal. The gardens, however, in all the poorer districts, have totally disappeared. The small house has been crowded onto the ground formerly allotted to them, and the revenue from the land has been increased by an intensive process, which while not building into the air has covered the ground with large numbers of dwellings. It is the limited height of the buildings that is the saving factor. If the houses were high with the consequent increase of overcrowding to the acre, the conditions would be extreme.

From the various types of houses known to us we have chosen for special mention three of those which show most clearly the character and needs of this district. The most striking of these is the occasional large tenement. In the early nineties the great increase of immigration suggested the building of tenements as a profitable investment. The result was a goodly number of scattered houses, built under the law governing the building of the ordinary dwelling-house and showing some of the worst phases of tenement house construction. Narrow air-shafts, lots closely built

¹ Watson's Annals, Vol. I, p. 43.

over, insufficient plumbing, badly ventilated and dark rooms, inadequate fire-escapes, would if multiplied have thrust upon us a problem of a very serious form. These houses hold from sixteen to fifty families. In many instances the yard space is a long narrow strip on which all the rooms are dependent for air and light except those on the front of the building. When the adjoining lot is covered in the same way the result is a narrow well in which sunshine cannot enter and through which there is no circulation of air. In one case, in a house built on the four sides of its ground, sixty-four rooms open on such a well which is seven feet six inches in width, while in another instance a copy of the New York dumb-bell plan is found. This movement was fortunately watched and arrested in its early development. Through the thoughtful action of Mr. Hector McIntosh and with the co-operation of a number of prominent city officials and others, a wise law was framed and accepted by the Legislature. The evil was checked and the building of large and badly arranged tenements prevented.

Under this act of May 7, 1895, the term tenement is defined as meaning every building which is, or is to be, occupied by three or more families, living independently of each other and doing their cooking on the premises. The act provides that not more than 80 per cent of a lot can be built on, except in corner properties, that the width of a yard shall be not less than eight feet, that every room in such houses shall have a window opening upon a street or upon the yard, that every tenement house over four stories high shall be fireproof throughout. It has also stringent provisions in regard to water supply, sanitation, minimum size of rooms, halls, etc. The cost of building is thus so much increased as to be almost prohibitive.

In 1890 the percentage of families living in tenement houses in Philadelphia was 1.44. Whatever the increase in this figure may be in the census of 1900,¹ it remains true that only the poorest live in one and two rooms, and that as soon as a higher rent can be paid, or a small house can be had at a low rent, the change is eagerly made. The management of all large tenements is very difficult, and manifest evils are sure to follow neglect and inefficiency on the part of the owners. Thus, in a community containing so large a number of small houses, the tide was turned from this plan of

¹ The Second Volume of the Census of 1900 is not yet issued.

housing at a critical moment, the results of which are of far-reaching benefit.

The second class of house which is found prominently is that built for one family of the better class and now converted to the use of three or more families of the very poor. In the history of housing in other cities, these houses have formed one step in the evolution of such tenements as we have described. Here, they form the most important phase of our tenement house problem. May it not be that by wisely adapting them to the needs of the very poor they can take the place of the larger tenements and give to Philadelphia the proud distinction of housing these classes in small buildings, which shall avoid the evils attendant upon the herding of many families together? At present, there are large numbers of houses of this class in the older parts of this region and a total failure of any adaptation of the old arrangements to suit the new conditions. The houses are usually well built and the rooms large and well ventilated, but there is no attempt at adequate or sanitary plumbing. The hydrant in the yard is often the only water supply and there is probably but one closet, also in the yard, the privy well of which may be shared by three adjoining houses. Little attention is given to care or management. The repairs are neglected, the stairways are dark, the halls obstructed by extra furniture and rubbish. In many cases the cellars are damp and filthy and give no provision for storage. The yards are obstructed, there are no arrangements for drying clothes.

The law provides that when buildings are altered into tenements certain provisions shall be enforced, but it makes no mention of the need for this alteration in houses so used without changes, nor does it exact any such changes. The landlord of the district is keenly alive to the fact that when alterations are to be made, an affidavit that the house is to be used by only two families will protect him from the exactions of the tenement house law. A special investigation into houses of this class would surely show how the law could be amended to cover their defects and to fit them at a moderate expenditure and under good regulation to meet the needs of the newly arrived immigrant and of the very poor.

This type of houses built for one family and changed into tenements has another and a worse form when it is used for what is known as a "furnished room house." There is a large, and it is believed a steadily increasing, number of these in the older parts

of the city and where conditions have greatly deteriorated. There are no data on which to estimate their number. A thorough inquiry could be made only with police or other authority behind the workers. These houses are tenements and have all the objectionable features of tenements in a marked degree, besides others peculiar to themselves. These features are intensified by the character of the tenants, who are of the lowest class. Sometimes the houses are used for immoral purposes, and the occupants generally are shiftless, intemperate and slovenly. Some few are deserving families where the breadwinner is out of work. Their conditions are deplorable, and they have not even the stimulus to decent living that comes from the ownership of household goods. The buildings are generally old, and ill-adapted to the number of people crowded in them. The rooms are rented by the week at prices ranging from \$1.50 to \$2.50 per room. They have the scantiest possible equipment of old and dilapidated furniture. They are dirty and unventilated; the beds and bedding indescribable. Water is seldom found above the ground floor. Bath-tubs are unknown or used for storage. In most cases there is but one closet in the yard for all the tenants of the house. The yards, as a rule, are filthy. There is no apparent effort at cleanliness or supervision. One room is the ordinary rule for one family, with frequent boarders in addition. In some cases the large rooms have been divided by flimsy partitions, and each half is occupied by a family. The primary need of these houses is frequent and efficient inspection. This is more urgent than in a case of ordinary tenements, as the occupants are the lowest and the poorest, and unable or unwilling to make any efforts in their own behalf. In no way can the Health and Building Department regulations be enforced, nor any general improvement in the condition of these houses be effected, except by a system of periodic inspection, followed by action by the proper city departments. It is entirely possible that a thorough investigation of these houses made under adequate authority throughout the city, would show the prevalence of conditions warranting a system of licensing—the license to be revoked upon failure by the landlord to enforce reasonable regulations as to cleanliness, decency, overcrowding, etc.—in addition to the present laws applying to all tenement houses.

The third class of houses to which we would draw special attention is that of the rear dwelling, a small two or three-story

house, built sometimes singly and sometimes in rows of from two to eight or ten houses on the rear of the front house. This plan of building has been characterized as the horizontal rather than the vertical tenement. The entrance to the row is by a narrow passage-way from the street or court. This passage-way is also frequently the means by which the surface drainage is carried to the street or to an open sewer-connection at its entrance. The space in front of the houses is the only yard. Sometimes this space widens at the end of the entrance-way and there is a double row of dwellings facing each other and covering the rears of two or three front lots. Sometimes again the open space forms a square with houses on three sides. Thus one comes unexpectedly on a little community whose existence one has not imagined. More often, however, the narrow passage-way runs the whole length of the row and in many cases the brick wall of an adjoining lot shuts away all air and sunshine and makes a prison of the little court.

In a careful investigation made by the college settlement into the sanitary condition of one block in its immediate neighborhood, this type of house was strongly illustrated. Out of a total of 196 houses in the block, over 90 were rear dwellings, and but a small proportion of these was underdrained. The building of rear houses is now prohibited by law. Such an investigation as we ask for would show many localities where some houses should be torn down to give light and air to the others, and other cases where the courts should be cut through or entirely demolished. Where the conditions are good, however, these houses meet the needs of the very poor and offer the advantage of an individual house, at a low rent, even though it involve the common use of yard space and closet and water conveniences.

Enough has been said about sanitation to show the great need of reform. The death rate is not the only gauge of the sanitary condition of the neighborhood. It is shown also in lowered vitality and poor health for which there are no statistical returns. The prevalence of surface drainage in Philadelphia is very imperfectly realized. Of its 1500 miles of streets, according to a Bulletin of the Department of Labor in 1901, there were in that year 419 miles that were unpaved, and 613 miles without sewers, leaving a balance of at least 193 miles of paved streets without underdrainage. In streets where drains have been laid, many houses have not been connected. The open drains still run through the great

majority of alleys, where the decaying matter stands in the gutters and when dried is scattered about by the wind. Neglected and foul privy wells are frequently found. The people are eager to tell their grievances and many are submitting patiently to intolerable conditions.

The most essential step now to be taken by the city is systematic and frequent inspection of sanitary conditions. If it is not possible to enforce underdrainage at once, such inspection would cause it to be enforced where flagrant nuisances exist, and the moral influence of an official would stimulate to better standards. The Board of Health can make but rare inspections on its own initiative and its small force of twenty inspectors of nuisances is unable to respond promptly to the numbers of complaints made to it. If this force and the force of the Bureau of Building Inspection were largely increased, with added powers, the evils of insanitary dwellings and of the evasion of the building law could be readily dealt with. There is no large city where these problems could be more easily solved.

To prove more fully the need of such measures we hope that an investigation full enough to give a comprehensive knowledge of existing conditions may soon be made. The results of such an investigation would not only promote these reforms, but would suggest other means of undoing the evils which have arisen from our long neglect and of safeguarding the future.

We have spoken thus far of the need of reform through legislation and the strengthening of the municipal departments whose work is so important in these districts. Such measures are necessary for all classes; it is for the very poor that something more is needed. The principle cannot be too strongly set forth that it is the management of the dwellings of the poor, whether they live in courts or tenements, that is to be the means of securing to them health and comfort, of giving them, in reality, homes. Miss Octavia Hill began in London in 1864 the work that was destined from the strength of its underlying principles to become a significant factor in dealing on these lines with the housing problem in Europe and also to some extent in this country.

While considering that the "spiritual elevation of a large class depends to a considerable extent on sanitary reform,"¹ Miss Hill believes also that sanitary improvement itself depends upon the

¹ "Homes of the London Poor," by Octavia Hill.

educational work among grown-up people and that this work must be effected by individual influence. It is this influence in the hands of the landlord or his representative that is so great a power, and can be used either for weal or woe.

Miss Hill's plan is not to tear down old buildings and to begin anew, but to improve existing conditions gradually as the tenants are trained gradually to appreciate and desire better things. This work is done with the assistance of large numbers of volunteer rent collectors, each one of whom is specially trained and is given a small group of tenants to care for. We quote from Miss Hill as to the duties of the collectors: "We have tried so far as possible to enlist ladies who would have an idea of how, by diligent attention to all business which devolves on a landlord, by wise rule with regard to all duties which a tenant should fulfill, by sympathetic and just decisions with a view to the common good, a high standard of management could be obtained. Repairs promptly and efficiently attended to, references carefully taken up, cleaning sedulously supervised, overcrowding put an end to, the blessing of ready money payment enforced, accounts strictly kept and, above all, tenants so sorted as to be helpful to one another." The relation thus established on a basis of mutual obligation is one of real and often enduring helpfulness, and the opportunities for service are almost unlimited.

Miss Hill's work has from the first been on a sound business basis and has given excellent financial returns. She has never formed any association of the owners of the many properties under her care, or of the workers who manage them. She has felt that the work is freer, and more real when thus untrammelled.

Many cities have followed the example of London in this plan of work. That of the Edinburgh Social Union is of unusual interest. It believes, as we must all believe, that the "immediate question to face is how to make the best of present conditions, how to raise the standard of comfort without waiting for legislative changes." Its reports tell a story of successful growth which is full of valuable and suggestive experience.

In Philadelphia the need for the extension of such work grows to us stronger and more insistent as we learn more of the neglected places of our city, of the many streets and courts which need such influences as these. We believe that this work must grow and that there will come also a more realizing sense of the responsibility of

the community for the welfare of its people. In the wise control of new building, and of the apartment houses which may be tenements in the future, by planning for wide streets and many open spaces, by the awakening of higher civic standards we shall come also to a higher social order. "Victory over evil at its source and not in its consequences; reforms which shall regard the welfare of future generations, who are the greatest number."¹

EDITOR'S NOTE.—The Octavia Hill Association is a stock company organized to improve living conditions in such neighborhoods as those described in the foregoing paper, on lines similar to the work of Miss Octavia Hill in London. Its aim is to improve old houses and small properties rather than to build new ones. It uses women rent collectors, both paid workers and volunteers. The Association was organized in 1896 and has a capital stock of \$50,000; it has paid yearly dividends of 4 per cent and 4½ per cent. Its capital is invested in houses which when purchased were typical of the classes above described. These houses have been properly altered and repaired and demonstrate the possibility of overcoming such conditions and yet receiving a fair financial return. The Association assumes also the management of property for other owners. It has seventy-seven houses now under its care, sixty-five of which are small houses for separate families, and twelve are tenements of a medium size, averaging eleven or twelve rooms each. The Association desires especially to extend its work of managing the properties of other owners, believing that the relation thus established is stronger and more enduring than where the ownership is in a company. Its directors are:

Nathaniel B. Crenshaw, President, Girard Trust Company, Broad and Chestnut streets; Miss Hannah Fox, 339 South Broad street; Mrs. William F. Jenks, 920 Clinton street; Mrs. Thomas S. Kirkbride, Secretary, 1406 Spruce street; Hector McIntosh, 605 North Sixteenth street; Miss Helen L. Parrish, 1135 Spruce street; Mrs. William M. Lybrand, 139 East Walnut Lane, Germantown; George Woodward, M. D., Chestnut Hill; C. H. Ludington, Jr., Treasurer, 425 Arch street.

¹ "Lessons from Work." (B. F. Westcott.)

The Housing Conditions in Boston

By Robert Treat Paine, Esq., Boston

THE HOUSING CONDITIONS IN BOSTON

BY ROBERT TREAT PAINE, ESQ.
Boston

The housing conditions of Boston may be studied under five aspects:

- 1. The growth of population compared with the increase of houses.
- 2. The facilities for the building of new houses by private enterprise.
- 3. The influence of philanthropic efforts in building model blocks and separate homes.
- 4. Building laws.
- 5. The diminution of slum conditions.

1. The following table has been prepared by Dr. E. M. Hartwell, statistician of Boston.

POPULATION AND NUMBER OF DWELLING-HOUSES WITH PER CENT OF ANNUAL INCREASE.

Year	Estimated Population.	Per Cent Increase.	Total Number of Dwelling-Houses.	Per Cent Increase.	Of those Vacant Dwellings.
1891	457,772	2.07	53,429	2.42	1 104
1892	467,260	2.07	54,853	2.67	1,269
1893	476,945	2.07	56,730	3.42	1,446
1894	486,830	2.07	58,310	2.79	1,866
1895	496,920	2.07	60,039	2.96	1,964
1896	509,102	2.45	60,278	.40	2,205
1897	521,583	2.45	61,573	2.15	2,127
1898	534,370	2.45	62,850	2.07	2,647
1899	547,470	2.45	63,890	1.65	2,902
1900	560,892	2.45	64,886	1.56	2,686
1901	573,579	2.26	65,600	1.10	2,627

In the ten years from 1891 to 1901, while the population increased from 457,772 to 573,579, or 25.3 per cent, the number of dwelling-houses increased from 53,429 to 65,600, or 22.8 per cent, not quite keeping pace; and though not a few of the new buildings

are capacious tenement houses, yet actual conditions have probably not improved. It is to be noted that 4 per cent of the dwellings are vacant.

2. The facilities for the building of new houses in the suburbs steadily increase. The suburbs of Boston are deservedly healthy and are ample for a vast population.

The President of the Boston Elevated Railway Company has furnished the following statistics, which show in the last five and ten year periods a marvelous development and explain the exodus outward from the crowded centre into happy and healthy suburban life on some of the hundred hills which make these suburbs so attractive. This outward migration shows no sign of culmination, but is still under full headway.

The running time of the cars has improved so that it now averages nine miles per hour on the whole system, against six miles or less ten years ago when horses were used, and within the last five years it has been reduced about 8 per cent. The track mileage increased from 260 miles in 1891 to 296 in 1896 and 408 in 1901. "For the year ending September 30, 1891, we ran 2,326,274 trips, 17,462,572 miles, carried 119,264,401 revenue passengers and 8,466,311 free transfer passengers. The average length of each trip at that time was 7.5 miles. Five years later we ran 2,822,142 trips, 25,841,907 miles, carried 166,862,288 revenue passengers and 17,566,361 free transfer passengers. The average length of each trip was 9.16 miles. Five years later, or for the last fiscal year, we ran 3,883,737 trips, 43,631,384 miles, carried 213,703,983 revenue passengers and 65,000,000 free transfer passengers. The length of each trip had increased to 11.23 miles."

The co-operative bank system has greatly promoted the construction and separate ownership of the modest and cosy little homes springing up so rapidly in all the suburbs of Boston. The Pioneer Bank was started in 1877, and to-day there are in Boston eighteen of these co-operative banks with a capital of \$5,029,478, nearly the whole of it loaned out on small estates. A score of years ago it was no easy matter to obtain a "building loan," but co-operative banks have perfected the system of loans to builders upon houses "in process of construction." The admirable process of small monthly payments not only educates the borrowers into habits of saving, but in a few years reduces the loan, so that the old-fashioned savings banks with their immense capital can take

up at lower rates these loans, when they are reduced to the statute limit of 60 per cent of the value of the estate. Hence it is the case that the \$5,000,000 of co-operative bank capital by no means measures the full beneficial influence of this system in the growth of suburban homes.

3. The influence of philanthropic enterprise, compared with that of private business, has been insignificant.

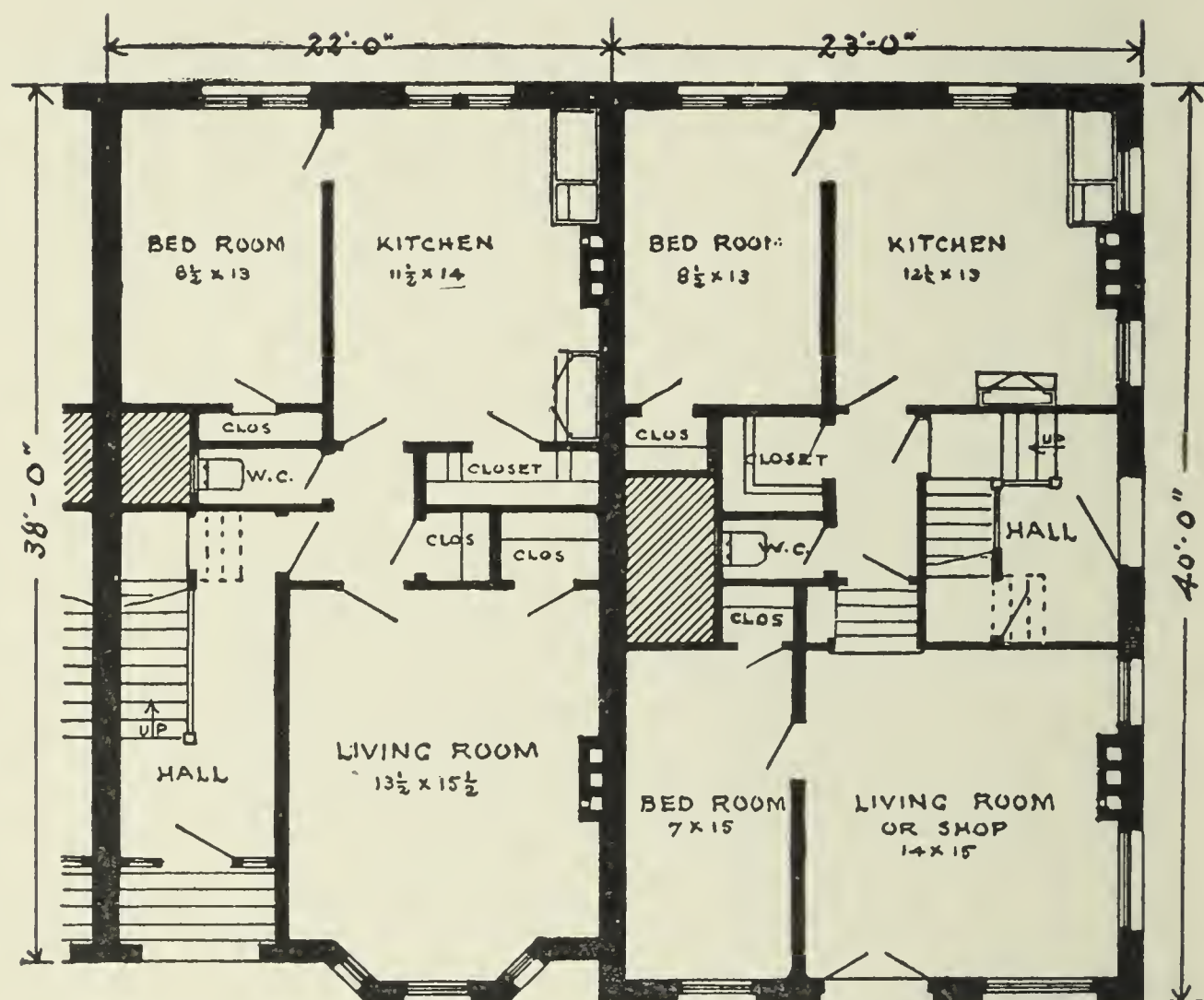
Three incorporated societies are working in a small way, the oldest, the Boston Co-operative Building Company, chartered in 1871. With a capital of \$292,000, it has about \$400,000 invested in seventy-eight houses with 985 rooms, occupied by 311 families containing 1,023 persons.

The Harrison avenue group of twenty-four three-storied brick houses—each, except the corners, arranged for three families—has attracted deserved attention, with its hollow square in the centre, tastefully arranged as a playground for the children, and a bit of beauty for the parents.

The company has just started to reproduce this hollow square on its last purchase of 33,000 feet on Massachusetts avenue. Mr. A. W. Longfellow, the architect of the Harrison avenue group, furnishes this plan of a corner and a normal interior house just completed on Massachusetts avenue, showing the latest developments of model tenement house design, and also a land plan.

The thirty-one years of life of this company show many vicissitudes; 7 per cent being earned for some years, and then from 1876 to 1889, dividends were stopped or reduced to 3 per cent and earnings were invested. Recently dividends have been 6 per cent or 5 per cent. But the capitalization of undivided profits has been so large, that it is not possible to ascertain what the just annual earnings are from year to year, and hence the educational influence is lost upon other capitalists who might be incited, by a clear and exact statement of facts, to follow the most commendable lead of this company in building the very best model tenements and having them managed by the considerate care of women agents.

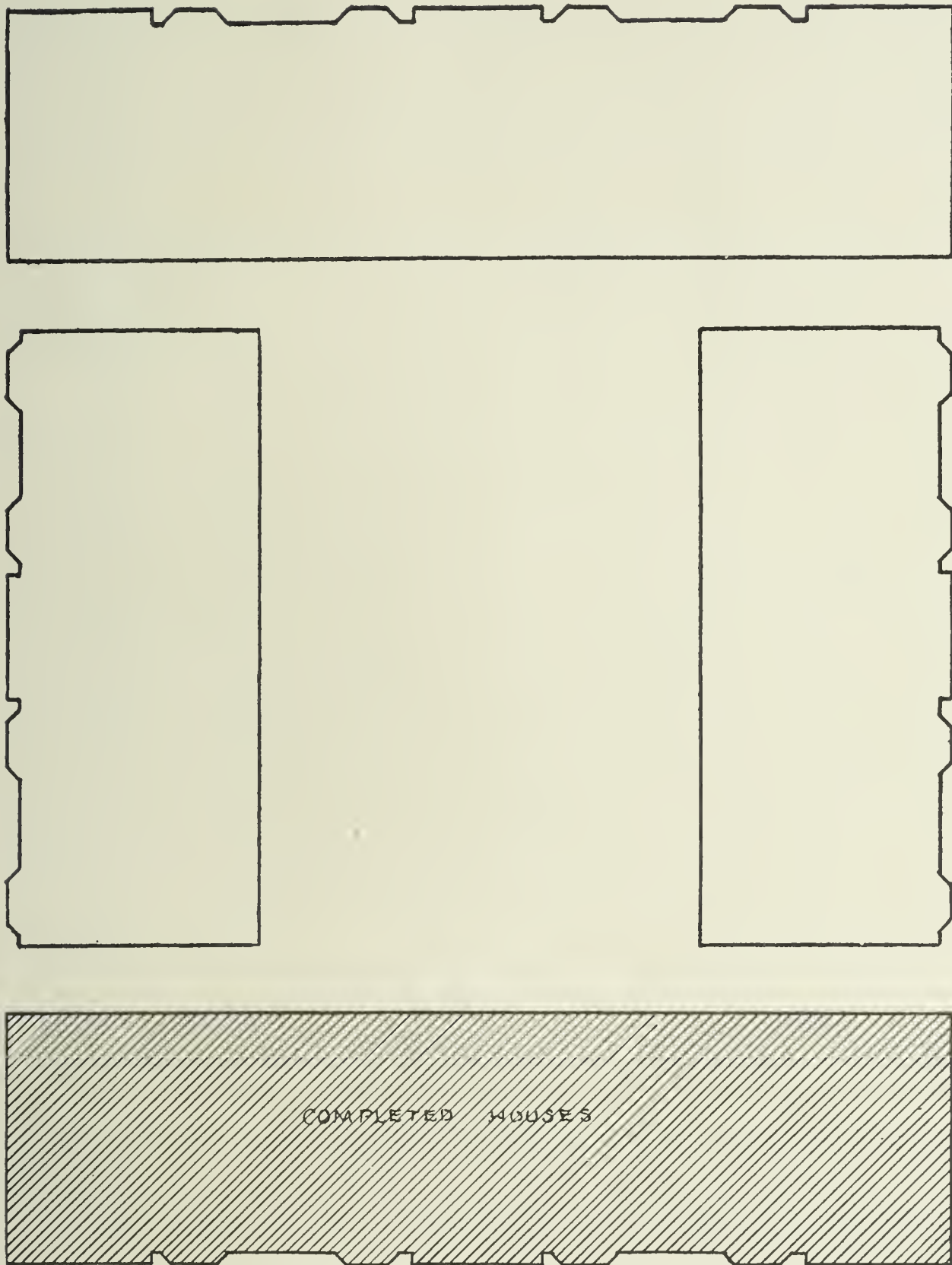
The Workingmen's Building Association was organized in 1888, to build small separate houses for sale. Its first purchase of 668,591 feet, about three miles out in Roxbury, was most successful. This tract was divided into 150 lots, averaging 4,457 feet, so that one acre has ten lots, with an estimated population of sixty to seventy souls.



SECOND FLOOR LIVING ROOM
11 1/2 x 15 1/2 ~ HALL BED ROOM 9 x 10 1/2

SECOND FLOOR LIVING ROOM
12 1/2 x 15 ~ BED ROOM 8 1/2 x 15

FIRST FLOOR PLAN OF TWO HOUSES OF THE
MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE BLOCK FOR THE
BOSTON COÖPERATIVE BUILDING COMPANY
· A. W. LONGFELLOW · ARCHITECT ·



PLAN SHOWING ARRANGEMENT OF BLOCKS ON MASS. AVE. LOT [150'x200']
AS PROPOSED FOR THE BOSTON COÖPERATIVE BUILDING COMPANY ❖ ❖ ❖
A.W. LONGFELLOW ARCHITECT BOSTON.

The houses cost from \$1,800 to \$3,000, and were almost all for single families, total cost of a house and land varying from \$2,600 to \$4,500. They were all sold by 1894. Its next venture in Dorchester found the demand for single houses painfully reduced in the depression of the last seven years, while a marked preference shows itself for "two-family" or "three-flat" houses.

This company has not succeeded in building houses at lower cost, to its great regret.

4. The building laws of a city greatly influence results. Boston was startled by its great fire of 1872 into creating a stringent code. This was remodeled in 1885, chapter 374. After a commission had studied the subject anew, the present code was enacted in 1892, chapter 419, with subsequent amendments.

Two features are especially important: (1), the percentage of the area of a lot which may be built upon; (2), the height of the buildings and the provisions as to fire-proof construction.

The law of 1892 permitted three-quarters of the area to be covered, measuring to the middle of the streets on which the lot abuts. This proviso, however, would allow a building to cover the whole of a lot sixty feet deep on a forty-foot street. The act also required two exposures on open spaces at least ten feet wide, of an aggregate length of one foot, for every twenty-five square feet occupied by the building.

These last provisions, however, were found not to prohibit the construction of a huge four-storied tenement house on a lot forty-two feet wide and 101 feet deep, built on a dumb-bell plan, with only about two feet of open land across a part, but not the whole, of the rear. It was the erection, in 1894, of this barrack, which led many observers to doubt whether these new conditions were not worse than the old; whether these vast tenement houses, sometimes called model houses, were not far worse in many essentials for the health and welfare of their occupants than the little old houses, often built of wood, which they replaced. These views are confirmed by the deliberate judgment which Miss Octavia Hill has put on record in her valuable chapter in the second volume of Charles Booth's great work on London.

The construction of this great tenement house, with such trifling rear light, occasioned the act of 1895, chapter 239, which reduced the area to be occupied from 75 to 65 per cent, and also required an open space across the whole rear of the building, and

of a depth equal to one-half the width of the front street, not exceeding twenty feet, or an equivalent area of open space in the rear of other dimensions.

The act of 1897, chapter 413, section 9, exempts corner lots from this requirement of open rear land, and also gives the Building Commissioner discretion to accept "an equivalent area of open space in the rear or on either side of such building."

It is worthy of note that these requirements are less stringent than those in the new tenement house law, chapter 334, of 1901, for Greater New York, which limits the building to 90 per cent of a corner lot and 70 per cent of any other lot.

Secondly, the law of 1897, chapter 413, section 3, required every tenement house to be a first-class building, *i. e.*, "of fire-proof construction throughout." It was at once apprehended that this requirement, that all tenement houses must be of fire-proof construction, would stop the building of tenement houses for tenants paying moderate rents. Subsequent investigation showed, that after existing permits had been exhausted, few, if any, tenement houses were built with tenements renting at \$16 a month or less. Reaction set in, and by the act of 1900, chapter 321, the requirement of fire-proof construction was removed from tenement houses of not more than four stories and not more than fifty feet in height, but here again came a proviso limiting these houses to "two families, or less, above the second story."

This is the present tenement house law of Boston. It seriously handicaps the construction of tenement houses, but whether this is too stringent, and the influences are harmful, is not yet apparent. So far as an impulse is given to scatter the population out into the healthier suburbs and into the small, separate, detached suburban homes, each with its little plot of land, instead of the fearful overcrowding of families in the huge new tenement houses, students of the social welfare of the people must certainly rejoice.

In the old North End of Boston, where population is densest and rentals are highest, the erection of new tenement houses and the remodeling of old buildings into tenement houses are visible in many of the streets. On the other hand, in the southerly part of old Boston, such enterprise is nearly at a standstill and rents are falling, owing probably to the greater attractiveness of the neighboring suburbs.

The definition of a tenement house by the number of tenements, rather than by the number of rooms, discriminates with unintended harshness on just that class whose welfare ought especially to be studied, the very poor, the lone widow, the widower, the parent with a single child, who always find with difficulty a single spacious room, and usually pay higher rents because of the short supply of such much-needed accommodation. Twenty years ago a committee of the Associated Charities made a report to show the importance of building tenements of a single room and to call the attention of capitalists to this need. A small one-storyed house with only four rooms, adapted for the needs of four separate women, must conform to all the expensive provisions of the tenement house code.

A just and judicious amendment should define a tenement house as having more than three tenements "*and containing more than twelve rooms.*"

Workers among the poor were surprised last year at orders issuing from the Board of Health, for single tenants to vacate single rooms. Such a notice was nailed on the door of the large "square room" in the model block of the Boston Co-operative Building Company, on Canton street, occupied by a lone old woman. It is supposed that this mistaken policy has been abandoned.

A strange thing happened in 1892; the building law of that year, chapter 419, in its final section 138, repealing numerous laws, included a repeal of the health provision, 1885, chapter 382, section 4, defining for health purposes a "tenement house." So that since 1892, the Board of Health has been shorn of so much of its powers over tenement houses as depended on the definition, so carefully inserted in the health law of 1885, which has been since then the health code of Boston. Perhaps it is stranger still that no allusion can be found in the annual reports of the Board of Health, to this mysterious and probably unintended curtailment of health powers, the exact legal effect whereof no man can tell.¹

¹ The Board of Health, in their report for 1900, (p. 40) say: "A tenement house in Massachusetts is one occupied by four or more families, while in New York it is one occupied by three families which was the law in Massachusetts until the statute was amended in 1894." This sentence is rich in blunders. No amendment was made in 1894. The Health Act of 1885, chapter 382, section 4, defined a tenement house as one with "more than three families." The Act of 1889, chapter 450, section 4, changed this to "more than two families." But the whole thing was repealed by 1892, chapter 419, section 138, so that *since 1892 there has been no definition at all of a tenement house in the health code of Boston*

5. A crusade for the extirpation of the slums of Boston has been waged for the last fifteen years, thus far with no great success. Housing conditions are justly to be condemned so long as old, dilapidated and unsanitary buildings are allowed to stand, often so overcrowded upon the land that sunlight and air are practically shut out. Such conditions are a disgrace to any city. They tempt the most wretched of the poor, or vicious, or criminal classes to worse degradation. The bread-winner loses his health, which is his only wealth. Children grow up in shameless loss of self-respect. Frequent visitors are physicians, police officers, and charity agents; physicians to struggle with needless disease, the police to arrest criminals created by their foul environment, and charity agents to relieve countless varieties of want caused by cruel and unjust conditions of life.

Private initiative has been struggling in these years to secure more vigorous action by the Board of Health in the destruction of the worst slums. Prof. Dwight Porter, acting under the auspices of a voluntary committee, made an investigation and "Report upon a Sanitary Inspection of Certain Tenement-house Districts in Boston," in 1888, which really started the movement.

Committees of the Associated Charities have lodged indictments against many vile slums and have been heard by the board. In 1891-2, the state caused the Bureau of Labor to make a thorough and exhaustive investigation. The report of Hon. H. G. Wadlin sets forth in two volumes the results. (22d and 23d Annual Reports of the Bureau of the Statistics of Labor. "A Tenement House Census of Boston," made pursuant to chapter 115, Resolves of 1891.)

Sanitary conditions were classified under five heads: excellent, good, fair, poor, and bad. It may be truly stated that tenements falling so low as to be classed "bad" are so intolerable as to demand most summary measures for their destruction, yet 1,346 houses were found to deserve this just but terrible condemnation (Vol. 1, p. 577).

"It may be safely assumed that whenever a tenement was designated as entirely bad as to its inside condition—that is, to be more explicit, was bad as to facilities for light and air, ventilation and cleanliness—such a tenement was unfit for human habitation. The existence of such tenements forms primarily *an indictment against the landlord* who is responsible for their condition. They

should either be abandoned or improved. In some cases such improvement as would render them suitable for occupancy can easily be made; in other cases, no doubt, they should be permanently abandoned." (Vol. 2, p. 417.)

"The existence of defective outside sanitary conditions is, upon the whole, *an indictment against the city*; for while some of the defects are due to unclean or poorly kept private ways and alleys, the responsibility of the city for the existence of such defects can hardly be avoided." (Italics are the writer's.) (Vol. 2, p. 418.)

In the reports of the Boston Board of Health no allusion is found to this fearful indictment by the authorities of the Commonwealth, or to the following municipal report.

In 1895 a special committee of the Common Council was appointed to consider what improvement could be made in the tenement districts of Boston, and what legislation was needed. They made a very brief "Partial Report" (Document 125 of 1895) from which may be quoted:—"In the North End the tenement houses are to-day a serious menace to public health. . . . The most astounding circumstance in connection with this investigation that attracted the attention of your committee is the social and financial standing of the owners of the most of these tenement houses."

In 1897 a study was made, under the direction of the Tenement House Committee of the Twentieth Century Club, of certain typical slums, and the results were published with plans of some seven areas where buildings were old, dilapidated and so overcrowded on the land, that no remedy was possible except destruction either of all or of many of the tenements. ("Some Slums in Boston," by H. K. Estabrook, May 15, 1898.)

A public hearing was granted by the Board of Health on June 27, 1898, and many competent experts and real estate owners testified to the intolerable conditions. Mayor Quincy attended the hearing and promised strong support. Commendable progress was made in vacating or destroying some of the worst slums for about three years. But the exercise of the power to "destroy" seems recently to have been paralyzed, perhaps, as a result of pending litigation.

The law grants two powers to the Board of Health to deal with these evils. Since 1850, chapter 108, tenements may be "vacated" if adjudged unfit for human habitation. This power should be exercised only after thorough investigation and on deliberate

judgment, setting forth true and sufficient causes. It may easily work grave injury to owners if exercised unjustly. Yet, when justly exercised, orders to vacate should be adhered to and not lightly rescinded because of political or other pressure. Observe that this power to vacate requires no destruction of the building and cannot justly prevent use of the vacated tenement for other fit purposes, not of human habitation.

In 1897, chapter 219, the power to destroy [the statute word is "remove"] buildings first appeared in Massachusetts. Its origin is interesting. The British "Housing of the Working Classes Act," 1890 (53-54 Vict., chapter 70), sections 30-37, is the origin, so far as I know, of this new power "to order the demolition" of a "dwelling-house" "unfit for human habitation." Section 38 enlarged this power and made it apply to "obstructive buildings," thus condemning one building because it injures another building. It is surprising that any American lawyer could suppose that such a power would be sustained in America, where the unlimited powers of the British Parliament are much curtailed by constitutional safeguards.

Yet New York soon copied this British Act (1895, chapter 567, amended by 1897, chapter 57) in shape so condensed as to make its injustice more conspicuous. This act was enforced for a few years in the city of New York, till owners of property began to defend their rights in court. The suit of *Dassori vs. the Health Department of New York* has settled that this law cannot be enforced to its full extent.

"Proof that rear tenement houses, each five stories high, lighted only from a court on the west or front from five to eleven feet wide, and a space or opening of eleven inches wide at the southeast corner of the court, and a space on the east side of eight inches filled with all sorts of filth, occupied by 115 persons, showing a death-rate almost twice the normal one, damp, filthy, infested with vermin, and filled with foul smells, and by their construction interfering with the light which would otherwise have been enjoyed by tenement houses on the front of the lots, justifies a finding that the rear tenement houses are unfit for habitation, but does not necessarily establish the fact that they are not capable of being made fit for other uses to which the owner might lawfully put them, nor does it show that the nuisance could not be abated in any other way than by their destruction.

"The owner of a tenement house cannot be compelled to submit to its destruction, if it is on his own land, merely because some building adjacent to it is, by reason of its existence, deprived of proper ventilation." (N. Y. Health Dept. *vs.* Dassori, Appellate Division Reports, Vol. 21, p. 348. October, 1897.)

Boston deserves no credit for the slovenly shape in which this faulty law was reproduced, 1897, chapter 219, closely following the language of the New York act. First the power to vacate is set forth, yet while covering the same ground as our ancient and well-tried statute (1850, chap. 108; Pub. Sts., chap. 80, sec. 24; Revised Laws, chap. 75, sec. 71), neither repeals nor amends it. Then follows the power to order "removed," *i. e.*, destroyed, a building irretrievably "unfit for human habitation."

Statute 1899, chapter 222, enlarged these powers of the Board of Health so that the order may be not merely to "vacate" a building "unfit for human habitation," but to "cease to use" a building "unfit for use"; the power to order buildings destroyed remaining limited to those "unfit for human habitation."

The suit (October, 1900) of *Holland vs. Durgin et al.* (Board of Health) has gone on appeal to the Supreme Court. It raises interesting questions as to this last statute, its constitutionality, the lawfulness of a decree to remove, without previous notice to or opportunity to be heard by the owner, as well as the lawfulness of an order to remove stables occupied by horses and sheds only for storage as "unfit for habitation" (*sic*), the statute language being "unfit for human habitation."

The Board of Health is thus clothed with transcendent powers, whose exercise vitally affects the physical and moral welfare, especially of that large portion of the people who are lowest in the economic scale. These powers should only be lodged in the hands of men of strong character, sound judgment, sanitary experience and genuine love for the plain people. Yet the action of the Boston Board of Health has been characterized for many years past by mysterious apathy.

The law provides that the Board of Health shall make annually "a full and comprehensive statement of its acts during the year, and a review of the sanitary condition of the city," yet in the annual volumes of the last ten years the space devoted to the sanitary condition of the city has been utterly insignificant.

"To this subject, houses vacated, nearly a whole page is

devoted in the report for 1892; nearly two pages in the report for 1893; from four to six lines in each of the reports for 1894, '95, and '96; and not one word in the report for 1897. Throughout the 122 pages of this last report, this extremely important duty to vacate houses unfit for occupancy is not mentioned.

"The report for 1895 says only this: 'The number of houses which the board has ordered vacated during the year because of their unsanitary condition is 112; of this number, however, a very large per cent were put in a satisfactory condition before the expiration of the time allowed the occupants to quit the premises, and in such cases the orders were not enforced.' The report for 1896 simply quotes this one sentence, word for word—except that '121' is substituted for '112.' This one sentence, then, is the 'full and comprehensive statement' of the acts of the three years, 1895-7."

In none of these reports since 1892 "is a list given either of houses ordered vacated or of houses actually vacated, yet hundreds of other lists and tables are given, as lists of stables ordered discontinued, of passageways paved, and even of minor defects in certain houses. While in the reports of the New York Board of Health there are complete lists of houses vacated and of those demolished, in only two of our reports, those for 1892 and '93, are any of the houses ordered vacated named."

The objection of injury to tenants by the destruction of slums has no weight. The Associated Charities (Report of 1898, pp. 40-48) seized the occasion of the building of the South Station and the change in the neighborhood, in 1897-8, to cause a careful study to be made of the results upon the welfare of the twelve poorest families known to them when that sudden and forced migration occurred. "It brought out the interesting fact that in every case the condition of the family was improved by the change."

Death-rates by wards are shown in the annual report of 1901 of the Registry Department of Boston for the first time, so that it is possible to compare. The ghastly fact stands out that the death-rate in some wards is more than double what it is in the healthier wards, viz: one person dying in the year 1900 out of 39 in Ward 7, 40 in Ward 13, 41 in Ward 6, and 42 in Ward 5, contrasted with one in 81 in Ward 25, 72 in Ward 24, 71 in Ward 23, 69 in Ward 20 (p. 5).

Now that this table proves how the murder of the innocents

goes on, the public conscience should be aroused. Statisticians will also tell us that the ratio of sickness keeps pace with the ratio of death, so that sickness among the poor, with its train of evils, is twofold more than good sanitary conditions should tolerate.

The model buildings of London have told the world what a powerful influence upon the length of life (and of course upon the amount of sickness) of their occupants is exerted by healthy homes. The Peabody buildings with a population of about 20,000 show a death-rate of about 1 in 71; and the Waterlow buildings, with 30,000 tenants, about 1 in 100, while the rate of all London is about 1 in 57. In Boston, 1 out of 48 dies yearly.

A Tenement House Commission will probably be appointed by the Mayor this year, to consider and report upon existing conditions and possible improvement.

On the whole, the outlook is full of hope. Vigilance and vigorous action are demanded of all municipal authorities. Public interest is aroused. The action of other cities in Great Britain as well as in New York and other American cities warns Boston not to fall behind in this movement, which will surely give to us and our children a healthier city for the homes of the plain people, with its plague spots extirpated, and an increasing proportion of the population living out in suburban homes in this city of unsurpassed suburban beauty.

Housing Conditions in Jersey City

By Mary Buell Sayles, Fellow of the College Settlements
Association

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The housing of the working people in Jersey City presents few striking or distinctive features. There are in the crowded parts of the city no such alley-intersected or narrow back street districts as are found in certain sections of Chicago and Philadelphia; there is no block which presents such conspicuously bad conditions of overcrowded land areas, and consequently deficient lighting and ventilation, as prevail throughout the newer tenement house districts of New York. None the less the evils of construction of sanitary neglect and of overcrowded living quarters, which have been brought to light in the recently completed investigation upon which the present article is based, are of a character both to claim the interest of specialists and to compel the attention of citizens.

In his report on housing conditions and tenement laws in leading American cities, Mr. Veiller, then secretary of the New York Tenement House Commission of 1900, notes but four cities, out of the twenty-seven which he discusses, as having a tenement house problem. Among these is Jersey City. Yet compared with the situation in New York, the Jersey City tenement house problem is still in its early stages. The great mass of the working class population is housed either in converted dwellings or in tenement houses of the primitive type commonly erected here, as in Manhattan, twenty to forty years ago; and these two classes of houses, which in the great city have been rapidly giving way, during the last generation, before the onslaught of the dumb-bell tenement with its characteristic eighteen-inch wide air-shaft and overcrowded lot, in the smaller city show few signs of a similar yielding of place. Very few tenements are at present in process of erection, and so few built within the last five or even ten years were found in the districts investigated, that it is difficult to speak with certainty of present tendencies in construction. It is, therefore, chiefly to evils long fixed upon the community and grown so familiar as to be generally overlooked, that attention has been directed—evils none the less serious for this fact, and all the more difficult to eradicate.

The investigation upon which, as has been said, the present paper is based, was necessarily very limited in scope, as it was undertaken single-handed and, under the conditions of the College Settlements Association fellowship, confined to a single academic year. Five hundred houses having been decided upon as a reasonable estimate of the field which could and should be covered, three districts were selected as representative both of the worst and—hardly less important—of average housing conditions. Seventeen blocks in all were investigated. Of these the investigation of the first was largely experimental, as it was undertaken before the printing of the regular schedules used later on, and its results, though hardly less complete than those afterwards obtained, are not in all respects uniform with them, and have therefore, for the present, been set aside. It is then with the returns from sixteen blocks, consisting of the records of five hundred and four houses,¹ and of two thousand one hundred and fifty-four apartments,² that we shall deal in this paper.³

Of the three districts, the first and largest includes the eight blocks bounded by Sussex and Essex and by Van Vorst and Hudson streets, together with two others adjoining, extending between Hudson and Greene to Grand, and between Van Vorst and Warren to Dudley street. The widest range of conditions, as might be expected from its relative size, is to be found in this district. From the comfortable well-built dwellings of Sussex street, only recently converted to tenement house uses, and still in a large proportion of cases unaltered, to the four and five story brick tenements and the huddled rear houses of Morris and Essex streets, every type and grade of house is represented. The population of the district is overwhelmingly foreign. Only 18 per cent of the 1,278 families interviewed were of American stock, while in some of the blocks south of Morris street the percentage falls as low as 11 per cent.

¹ Entrance to nine houses within these blocks was prevented by owners—seven of the houses belonging to one person. While the Board of Health badge was worn by the investigator, no actual authority was conferred therewith, so that entrance to houses or apartments could not be insisted upon.

² These 2,154 apartments make up 98 per cent of all occupied apartments in the houses investigated. In the case of a few of the remaining apartments, information was refused by tenants; in most cases, however, the apartments were not investigated because tenants could not be found at home during the day, neighbors stating that they were absent regularly at work.

³ A very few apartments were occupied by two families; hence the slightly greater number of families than of apartments covered.

The foreign elements most largely represented are the Polish and Russian, who together lead with 28 per cent; the Germans who follow with 20 per cent, and the Irish with 18 per cent. Twenty other nationalities are represented, but as the most numerous, the Jewish, is represented by but thirty-two families, no one of them forms an important element numerically in the population.

The industrial attractions which have brought together this foreign population are not far to seek. The great American Sugar Refinery looms conspicuously on the southern boundary of the district; numerous other factories and workshops are interspersed through the blocks; while to the north, within a few minutes' walk, lies the Pennsylvania Railroad, and to the south, across a narrow strip of water, stretch the docks of the Central Railroad of New Jersey. The foreign population shows, as was to be expected, a heavy preponderance of factory hands, railroad employees, and longshoremen.

The second district includes the two blocks bounded by Railroad avenue and Morgan street and by Henderson and Warren streets, and another adjoining, extending between Provost and Henderson to Bay street. Bounded to the south by the Pennsylvania Railroad's elevated tracks, stretching out toward the Erie Railroad, and hedged in towards the Hudson by factories, foundries and workshops, it offers to the immigrant almost the same inducements of employment as does District I, and presents an even larger percentage of foreign-born inhabitants. Of the 506 families whose apartments were investigated, not quite 14 per cent were Americans, 42 per cent were Polish, 18 per cent Irish, 13 per cent Italians and 4 per cent Germans. Among the remaining families the Jewish lead, numbering 16.

The houses of this district correspond with the older and more neglected portion of District I, showing, however, a larger proportion of wooden buildings and a smaller proportion of high tenements.

District III, consisting of the three blocks bounded by First and Second and by Monmouth and Merseles streets, is located farther from the business centre of the city and from the water front, near the foot of the hill on which are situated most of the better-class resident districts. It lies in the heart of what is known as Little Italy—the most distinctively national section of the city, and the most dilapidated and neglected. Sixty-five per cent of the

377 families interviewed were Italians, and their manner of packing themselves solidly where once they enter into possession gives to the southern half of the district, with the blocks adjoining, an intensely foreign aspect. The remaining 35 per cent, among whom the Irish, the American with 10 per cent, and the German nationalities predominate, are interspersed chiefly on the northern side of the blocks, along Second street.

Rival attractions to the railroads, factories and docks, which claim so large a part of the population in the other two districts, are here offered by the dump-grounds adjacent. Irregular heavy laboring work is, however, the predominating occupation among the Italians, though the rag-picker and junk-dealer are frequently found, as well as the omnipresent factory hand.

So much for the characteristics of the separate districts. For the remainder of the paper, the houses will be dealt with, in the main, without regard to district lines. Some preliminary classifications may properly be given before more detailed points of construction and sanitation are taken up, or special evils pointed out.

First of all, classifying the 504 houses by materials, we find that just 55 per cent are of wood, and 45 per cent of brick—a few of the former having brick, and a few of the latter stone, fronts. If we group them by the number of stories, three-story and three-story-and-basement houses are found to lead with 54 per cent; four and four-story-and-basement houses come next with 31 per cent; 5 per cent have five stories; the remaining 10 per cent have either two stories or two stories and basement, with the exception of two houses, one and one-half stories and one-story-and-basement respectively.

Again, we may group the houses by the number of apartments contained. Houses occupied by but one family were not touched in the investigation, but sixty-three two-family houses were examined, leaving 431 houses which contain accommodations for three families or more, thus falling under the definition of a tenement house most generally accepted throughout the country. Three-apartment houses are most common, 25 per cent of the total number falling under this head; 58 per cent have from four to nine apartments; of houses containing ten apartments or more there are twenty-three, or 4 per cent.

Another significant classification of houses is that by position

on the lot. Fourteen per cent of the houses investigated are rear houses. These figures, however, give little idea of the actual aspect of things, as two blocks are without any rear houses, and six others have but one or two each, while in one block rear houses constitute no less than 40 per cent of all. These houses are seldom over three stories in height, are almost always of wood, are in general very old and frequently dilapidated.

Turning now from classifications of the houses themselves to consider the apartments they contain, we find that three-room apartments lead by a wide margin, constituting 41 per cent of the total of 2,154. Next come four-room apartments with 28 per cent; two-room apartments with 12 per cent; five-room apartments with 7 per cent; six-room apartments with 4 per cent. Of one-room apartments there is less than 1 per cent. One per cent of the apartments examined contained over six rooms.

If now, leaving these preliminary statistics, we turn to matters of greater interest, we shall find it convenient to group the chief evils found, as first, evils of construction, under which we shall speak only of the two leading faults, lack of proper provision for escape in case of fire, and inadequate lighting and ventilation; next, sanitary evils, some of which are structural and some the result of natural conditions or neglect; and lastly, evils of occupancy, chief among which is that of overcrowded apartments.

The absence of fire-escapes is perhaps the most conspicuous and glaring fault observable in the tenement houses of Jersey City. Of the twenty-four five-story buildings found, just one-half were provided with fire-escapes; while of the 155 four-story or four-story-and-basement houses, only four were so equipped. After these figures it will hardly surprise anyone to learn that in no case was a fire-escape found upon a three-story house. There are thus out of a total of 431 tenement houses, most of them three stories or more in height, but sixteen, or 3 per cent, which are provided with fire-escapes of any kind.

The character of the fire-escapes found makes them in a number of cases practically valueless. The balconies of five had wooden floors; and not only in a large proportion of cases were balconies seriously encumbered and stairway or ladder openings covered by tenants, but in two instances trap doors were regularly fitted to these openings, the owner thus encouraging the use of the balcony as a general catch-all and storage place. Furthermore,

in only three houses did all the apartments above the ground floor have access to a balcony, while in one instance, but one out of four families was provided with such means of egress. No form of fire-proof construction was anywhere found, even the dumb-waiter shafts in the higher buildings, well known to be one of the most common paths by which fire spreads, being almost without exception of wood.

In regard to lighting and ventilation, the facts are less easily grouped. The buildings being seldom of a depth to encroach seriously upon the yards, we find, with the exception of a very few of the higher houses, that nearly all of the kitchens and general living-rooms open upon the yard or street and are thus adequately lighted. In the converted dwellings, and in all houses occupied by but one family on each floor, a large proportion of bedrooms also are open to the outer air. But in the three or four story buildings erected originally for tenement uses, and furnishing accommodations for two families or more on a floor, a light bedroom is more nearly the exception than the rule. The typical interior room is lighted by a window to the outer living-room or a public hall, these windows seldom having more than five square feet of glazed surface, and more frequently an area of from three to four square feet. One thousand and eighty-four such rooms were noted in the course of the investigation; while—a still more serious evil—399 rooms were found which had no window at all, and in most cases not even a transom opening into another room.

Light and air shafts were found in only a small proportion of the tenement houses investigated; and a light and air shaft which is more than the merest travesty of its respectable name is emphatically an exception. The typical shaft is a triangular or oblong niche in the outer wall, with an area of from five to twenty square feet; an occasional variation being found in a square shaft of about the same area, let into the interior of the house and covered in most cases by a skylight. Below the top story such shafts furnish practically no light, while tenants bore almost unvarying witness that windows upon them were uniformly kept closed. A single whiff of the pent-up air within their narrow walls is quite sufficient to convince one of the wisdom of such disregard of their presence; and one feels no surprise in reading the evidence of chemists and physicians as to the positive injury to health wrought by pretended ventilation of this sort—evidence which has led to the

giving of the suggestive name of culture tubes to such shafts. Among evils of sanitation only a few of the most serious can be touched upon. Most conspicuous and widespread of all is that of the foul and ill-smelling privy vault. Seventy-five per cent of the houses investigated furnish no toilet accommodations save these objectionable structures in the yard. The vaults are in the main sewer-connected, one block and part of another in District III being the only sections in which no street sewer is laid, though unsewered vaults were found in small numbers elsewhere. But a sewer connection is in a large proportion of cases a most illusory blessing. The great mass of solid matter frequently remains after the liquids have run off to the sewer, and its decomposition renders the air of the yard, upon which the rear rooms depend, many times almost intolerable. In two cases school-sinks—modified privies, with metal vaults in which water stands—were discovered in cellars; but as the water was changed, according to the testimony of tenants, but once a week, these cannot be said to offer many advantages over the ordinary privy. Among the 368 water-closets in use in the remaining houses, the old and objectionable pan closets number sixty-one; while numerous water-closet compartments are either entirely unventilated or have windows only to halls or rooms, and in a number of cases, especially on the top floor of five-story buildings, the water-flush is wholly inadequate to cleanse the bowl.

A serious evil is also found in the location and condition of household sinks. In seventy of the houses investigated all such sinks were located in the public hall, while in fifty-five other houses sinks were so located on one or more floors. Nearly every such sink is used by two families. In one block, chosen at haphazard from those of the Italian district, sixty apartments were found whose occupants were obliged so to share their sink; while fifteen other apartments were provided with but one sink to every three or four apartments. Furthermore, eight houses were found in which, in flat defiance of a city ordinance, no water at all was furnished indoors. One row of four such houses, containing in all twenty-two apartments, was provided with but two hydrants in the common yard, one hydrant serving for ten, the other for twelve apartments.

The collection of statistics as to the plumbing of sinks was not at first attempted, but was taken up as the result of an observation

of conditions in the earlier blocks investigated. Eleven hundred and sixty-two sinks, located in four blocks of District I, and in the six blocks of Districts II and III, were examined. Of these only 10 per cent were properly trapped and vented; 68 per cent were trapped but not vented—a far from satisfactory state of affairs, especially where as in many cases traps were so small or otherwise defective as to be practically useless; 10 per cent were neither trapped nor vented, the pipes thus offering free passage to the contaminated sewer air; 12 per cent were boarded up solidly, so that the waste-pipes could not be examined—an almost sure sign that the concealed plumbing is of the oldest and worst type.

One serious element in the insanitary conditions of the districts investigated, which, unlike those just mentioned, cannot primarily be charged to the householder, is found in the character of the land upon which a large part of lower Jersey City is built. Only six of the sixteen blocks investigated are composed entirely of original solid ground. Five blocks in District I were in greater or less degree formed by the filling in of marsh land or the extension of the water front. All of District II, and nearly all of two blocks of District III, were so formed.¹

The significance of these facts appears when we realize that land so made is largely intermingled with refuse matter, and, still more important, is generally damp and is subject to periodic risings of tidewater. In a large proportion of the houses built upon such land, observations of the investigator, supplemented by the testimony of tenants, proves that the water in cellars unprotected, as are nearly all, by water-proof flooring, stands at times to a depth of several inches. Sewage is thus frequently washed back into yards and cellars, first-floor apartments are rendered damp and unhealthful, and nauseating odors suggest the serious danger to health which such a condition brings upon the entire house. Fortunately the cellar-dwelling evil is not a prevalent one in Jersey City; yet one instance is recalled where a family paying for four rooms in the basement and first floor had been obliged to vacate the lower two rooms entirely—the men of the family wading through water knee-deep to rescue the kitchen stove.

One of the most serious evils from which the poorer classes suffer is that of overcrowded apartments. As was anticipated

¹ See topographical map prepared for the National Board of Health in 1880 by Spielman & Brush. The only copy known to exist is in the Jersey City Public Library.

from the facts brought to light by investigations in other American cities, this evil was found to be most prevalent among the poorest foreign population, especially the Poles and Italians, and is largely due to the custom of taking so called boarders—really, in most cases, lodgers, who provide their own bedding and pay in the neighborhood of two dollars a month.

There are two ways of measuring overcrowding in apartments; by number of individuals per room, and by cubic air space per individual. To secure perfectly accurate results, it is of course necessary to discover just how many rooms in a given apartment are occupied for sleeping purposes and how many persons sleep in each. This may seem a simple matter, but in practice reliable results are not only very difficult, but in many cases impossible to secure, save by a night inspection. Not only must allowance be made for very general under-statement of the number of boarders taken, but in a large proportion of cases either no answers at all or wholly unsatisfactory answers can be obtained to questions as to the distribution of members of the family and of boarders at night. Under these circumstances it has seemed best, instead of attempting to state the number of individuals sleeping in each room and the precise cubic air space afforded by that room to each, to give the ratio of number of occupants to entire number of rooms in each apartment, and the cubic air space per individual afforded by that apartment as a whole. Only rough indications of the degree of overcrowding at night are of course given by this method, but it has at least the advantage of greater accuracy so far as it goes than could fairly be claimed for one seemingly more precise.

Applying the method of measurement by cubic air space to the 2,154 apartments investigated, we find that in 65 per cent of them each occupant has an allowance of 600 cubic feet of air or more. Living conditions in most of these apartments are fair, and in many good; yet some of the most disgraceful cases of overcrowding were found among them—as in one apartment, where in a single large room two little girls of about twelve years slept, together with a varying number of male boarders. The remaining 35 per cent of apartments afford less than 600 cubic feet of air space per occupant. This means in nearly all cases a serious degree of overcrowding; since if bedrooms alone are occupied at night such an allowance for the whole apartment means actually on an average less than 400 cubic feet, and often less than 300 or even 200 cubic feet for each person; while if the crowding compels the use of the kitchen for sleeping

purposes, other evils hardly less serious are added to those of limited air space. Such being the meaning of the figures given, it becomes evident that in the 199 apartments, 9 per cent of all, in which there were found to be less than 400 cubic feet of air space to each occupant in the apartment as a whole, very serious danger to health exists. It is below the limit of 400 cubic feet per adult, with a smaller allowance for children, that government interference has generally been authorized, where authorized at all; as is notably the case in Glasgow, where the law is enforced by an especially efficient system of night inspection, and among American cities in New York.

The other test of overcrowding, by ratio of number of persons to number of rooms, while a less accurate means of estimating effect on health, furnishes a more accurate indication of the relation of overcrowding to standards of decency. An example typical of many cases met with will make this distinction clear. Suppose two large high-ceiled rooms with a total cubic contents of 3,500 cubic feet, occupied by eight people. Each person has then more than the minimum of 400 cubic feet; yet the absence of any possibility of privacy or decency of living involved where men and women boarders, parents and growing children make up the eight, need not be dwelt upon. It is evident that four rooms with an aggregate contents of less than 3,200 cubic feet might be occupied by the same eight persons with perhaps greater danger to health from limited breathing space, but with certainly better opportunities for separation by sexes.

If we apply this second method of measurement, we find that in 24 per cent of the total number of apartments there are two persons or more to each room. Such apartments may fairly be classed as overcrowded; since either every room is occupied for sleeping purposes, or if one room is reserved for kitchen and living-room, the bedrooms are shared by a minimum average of two and two-thirds, three or four persons each, according as the number of rooms in the apartment is four, three or two.¹ To appreciate what this means it is of course necessary to realize that few bedrooms in such apartments contain more than 800 cubic feet, while a large proportion are dark interior rooms containing from 600 to 400 cubic feet or even less. These facts having been pointed out, it is unnecessary further to emphasize the seriousness of the state of affairs, where, as in 196 apartments, 9 per cent of the total num-

¹ Very little overcrowding was found in apartments of more than four rooms.

ber, the ratio of number of occupants to number of rooms rises as high as 2.5 or more.

Space will not permit of an extended comparison of these conditions of overcrowding with those revealed by similar investigations in other cities. It is interesting, however, to note in passing that the average number of individuals per room in the districts investigated is higher than the average number of occupants per room in the 9,859 apartments covered by the recent investigation of the City Homes Association in Chicago; the former being 1.35, and the latter 1.28 persons. While averages do not form the most satisfactory basis of comparison, a difference so marked as this unquestionably indicates a greater degree of overcrowding in the Jersey City than in the Chicago districts.

Enough has been said, it is believed, to show that serious housing problems demand solution in Jersey City. While the investigation covered the living environment of but 10,179 persons out of a total city population of 206,433, it may yet fairly claim to have some representative value. The districts investigated of course present conditions different in some respects from those of the city as a whole. Thus—to use a method of comparison too rough to have any but a suggestive value—while but 28 per cent of the total population of the city are foreigners, 84 per cent of the heads of families whose apartments were investigated are foreign-born. Along with this large proportion of the poorest foreign population go unquestionably especially bad conditions of overcrowding, and in many respects of sanitary neglect; though such is not the case with faults of housing construction pure and simple. Nevertheless the accusation that an unfairly dark and harrowing picture has been presented cannot justly be brought; since on the one hand many tenement houses of the best type were included, as is shown by a range of monthly rents between extremes of \$17 and \$3 per apartment; while on the other, large numbers of blocks as bad in character as any of those investigated could be pointed out in other parts of the city. The hope of furnishing data upon which a movement for reform might safely base its demands was the determining incentive to the investigation; but this direct practical aim has by no means obscured the sociological and scientific interests involved. If the results obtained shall on the one hand be used as a point of departure for social effort, and on the other be judged a real though small contribution to the literature of the housing problem, the ends sought will have been fully attained.

